FIVE

DISSERTATIONS.

I. On the Athanasian Doctrine.

II. On the Socinian Scheme.

III. On the Person of Christ.

IV. On the Rise, Progress, Perfection, and End of Christ's Kingdom.

V. On the Causes which probably conspired to produce our Saviour's Agony.

BY EDWARD HARWOOD, D. D.

Υμας δε της προτερας αφεμενους φιλονεικιας, και της των προγονων πλανης απαλλαγεντας, ἑλεσθαι τα λυσιτελουντα νυνι. ουδεν οιομενους περι τους προγονους ὑμων εσεσθαι πλημμελες παρ᾽ ὑμων, ει τἀναντια νυνι των προτερον μη καλως δοξαντων αυτοις, χρησιμα φαινοιτο παρ᾽ ὑμιν. ἡ γαρ των πραγματων ακριβης εξετασις, και τα δοξαντα καλως εχειν, πολλακις αλλοιοτερα δεικνυσιν, ακριβεστερα πειρᾳ τἀληθες βασανισασα. *Justin Martyr, Cohortatio ad Græcos*, p. 41, 42. *Edit. Oxon.* 1703.

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TO

RICHARD FARR, Esq.

ALDERMAN of BRISTOL.

IN Teſtimony of his Character as a worthy Magiſtrate, a rational Chriſtian, and a truly good Man: And in acknowledgment of the many Favours received from his Family, Theſe Diſſertations with the greateſt Reſpect and Gratitude are inſcribed by his obliged humble Servant,

EDWARD HARWOOD.

TO

RICHARD FARR, Esq.

ALDERMAN OF BRISTOL.

IN Testimony of his Character as a worthy Magistrate, a rational Christian, and a truly good Man: And in acknowledgment of the many Favours received from his Family, These Dissertations, with the greatest Respect and Gratitude are inscribed by his obliged humble Servant,

EDWARD HARWOOD.

PREFACE.

THESE Diſſertations, it is preſumed, will not be unacceptable to the friends of free enquiry, and to the lovers and encouragers of ſacred literature. They were originally compoſed, and are now delivered to the public, with an honeſt intention to ſerve the cauſe of rational religion. If this publication contribute ever ſo little to the promotion of truth and piety, the time and pains the author employed in compiling it, will be abundantly recompenſed. If any of the ſentiments here advanced be erroneous, I can appeal to God that the error is involuntary, and that Being, who knoweth my ſincerity, will, I truſt, forgive me. It affords great ſatisfaction to reflect that the TRUTH, as

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it is in Jesus, is silently and secretly spreading its conquests, and that those sentiments and systems which our great and good Ancestors, educated in Popish principles, and just emerged from Popish darkness, introduced into the creed and worship of Christians, are, upon a free and impartial examination of them by the light of reason and the word of God, found to be *human* institutions, and to be greatly abhorrent from the simplicity, genius, and honour of scriptural Christianity. Whatever religious melancholy and morosenes may suggest, no age, perhaps, can be mentioned in which religious liberty, free enquiry, and biblical erudition, could boast a greater number of patrons and advocates. It is to the last degree criminal and dishonourable for a minister of the gospel to conceal the truth, or in a timid and illiberal manner to approach it, like *Nicodemus*, in the *night*, for *fear* of the censures of the world. Hoary and venerable ERROR

would

would to this moment have maintained her throne, and the empire of darkneſs and dullneſs be perpetuated to the end of time, and there never would have exiſted any ſuch Religion as the Chriſtian, any ſuch characters among mankind as Martyrs and Confeſſors, or any ſuch illuſtrious æras in the annals of the world, as Religious Reformations; had wiſe and good men *ever* complimented prieſts and princes with believing as they believed, and ſacrificed their underſtandings at the ſhrine of the popular ſuperſtition. Almighty God hath bleſſed, and Divine Providence will continue to give a bleſſing and ſucceſs to every attempt of this kind, to promote rational religion and the ſacred cauſe of TRUTH, until at laſt thoſe things, which now give juſt offence to intelligent and ſerious Chriſtians, which damp the ſpirit of their *public* devotions, and which they ardently, but ineffectually, wiſh were removed, will be totally

totally exterminated, and the bleſſed goſpel in its primæval purity and ſimplicity, free from all human ſchemes and corrupt admixtures, convince the underſtanding, conſtitute the faith, direct the practice, and enſure the beſt intereſts and happineſs of the whole world.

Briſtol,
May 16, 1770.

E. HARWOOD.

DISSERTATION I.

ON THE

ATHANASIAN DOCTRINE.

Εγω δε τινας, ὡς εν πληθει πιςευοντων και δεχομενων διαφωνιαν, δια την προπετειαν ὑποτιθεσθαι, τον Σωτηρα ειναι τον επι πασι Θεον· αλλ᾽ ουτι γε ἡμεις τοιουτον, οἱ πειθομενοι αυτῳ λεγοντι, Ο πατηρ, ὁ πεμψας με, μειζων μου εςι. *Origen contra Celsum. Lib.* 8. p. 387. *Cantab.* 1677.

DISSERTATION I.

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A Great argument in favour of the credibility and inſpiration of the Chriſtian religion, ariſes from thoſe corruptions which it faithfully predicts, that men in ſubſequent ages, would introduce into its worſhip and doctrine. Could any one, who heard our Saviour deliver that excellent ſummary of Chriſtian faith and morality, contained in his ſermon on the mount, ever have divined, that on the baſis of this plain religion there would, in future time, be erected the moſt compleat ſyſtem of myſtery and myſticiſm, which the genius and ſuperſtition of men ever formed and faſhioned! It is the ſingular and unrivalled glory of our divine religion, that its doctrines, duties, and diſcoveries are as intelligible as they are important. A *Revelation*, which is *obſcure*, is a contradiction. The *poor*, originally, had the goſpel preached to them: and the *poor* are capable of underſtanding all its fundamental articles. There is not one Reve-

lation for the philoſopher, another for the peaſant: not one ſyſtem of diſcoveries for the rich, another for the poor. Chriſtianity hath, for its great and glorious object, the mental and moral improvement, and final ſalvation of all orders and degrees of men. It is like its great author, no reſpecter of perſons. It diſpenſeth to ALL, the water of life freely, and reads ſacred inſtruction to every capacity, with the greateſt clearneſs and perſpicuity. Its great aim and end, is not to revolt the underſtanding, but to enlighten it—not to overwhelm and extinguiſh reaſon, but to purify and exalt it—not to envelop religion in the ſacred gloom of myſtery, but to diſpel all thoſe baleful miſts in which ſuperſtition had involved it. It redounds to its everlaſting honour, that it enforces all the capital articles of natural religion, inculcates all the obligations of moral duty, and delivers theſe with ſuch a familiar, undiſguiſed plainneſs, that no underſtanding can miſtake them. The companions and diſciples of our Lord were not educated in the ſchools of the Rabbies, or initiated into the ſubtilties and ſophiſms of the Greek philoſophy *. Their language was unadorned and

* Αγραμματοι και ιδιωται, *Acts* IV. 13. Αγραμματοι, *ſine literis:* id eſt, non verſati in doctrinis Talmudicis. *Grot.* in loc. Ανθρωπος αγραμματος και αγροικος. *Plutarch. Apophtheg. Regum.* p. 75. *Edit. Pemberton, Oxon.*

and artleſs—their ſpeech did not conſiſt in the *wiſdom of words* *:—it was the *plainneſs* of their diſcourſe, which rendered them the objects of the loweſt contempt and ridicule to the *Grecks*, whoſe vitiated taſte, at that time, could not reliſh ſimplicity in any thing—could reliſh nothing but extravagant flights of fancy, artificial embelliſhments of rhetoric, and the acute refinements and diſtinctions of metaphyſical ſophiſtry. Any perſon, therefore, poſſeſſed but of the ſmalleſt degree of penetration and ſagacity, might eaſily foreſee, that if the Chriſtian religion ſhould ever be adopted by this people, their genius for metaphyſical ſpeculation would ſoon lead them, not indeed to deny its great capital truths, but to ſpeculate upon them, to make them harmonize with thoſe reſpective ſects and ſyſtems of philoſophy in which they had been educated, and to exerciſe their talents in forming and writing compariſons between the Theology and Ethics

* Ουκ εν πειθοις ανθρωπινης σοφιας λογοις, 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. Ου λογων υμιν απεγγελλοντων τεχνας, ουδε πιθανως και πιστευτικως λεγοντων· τουτο γαρ ιδιον των την αληθειαν κλεπτειν εθελοντων· αλλα απλως τοις επιτυχουσιν ονομασι τε και ρημασι χρωμενων. *Juſtin Martyr. Cohort ad Græc.* p. 118, 119. *Edit. Oxon.* 1703. Sed ab indoctis hominibus et rudibus ſcripta ſunt, et idcirco non ſunt facili auditione credenda. Vide ne magis hæc fortior cauſa ſit, cur illa ſint nullis coinquinata mendaciis, mente ſimplici prodita, et ignara lenociniis ampliare. *Arnobius*, p. 34, 35. *L. Bat.* 1651.

Ethics of Chriſtianity, and the exalted flights and viſions of their beloved *Plato*. Accordingly, it appears from the hiſtory of the Chriſtian religion, that its pure and ſacred ſtreams received their firſt pollution from the Greek philoſophy. The reader need only conſult any page in *Irenæus*, where he treats of *Æons*, and *Dæmons*, and *Intelligences*, to have a lamentable conviction of this. The ſimplicity of the goſpel doctrine did not afford proper nutriment for the faſtidious metaphyſical appetite of the *Greeks*. They could regale on nothing but ſublime and unintelligible myſticiſm.

With great concern the Apoſtles beheld this philoſophizing ſpirit of the Greeks, which refuſed to be ſatisfied with the plain truths of the goſpel, beginning to operate in their days. They expoſed the futility of ſome of theſe refinements on Chriſtianity, and have left us the beſt counſels and admonitions to guard us from the ſeduction of theſe principles, and from their wretched depravation of Scriptural truth. Some, even in *their* times, who had embraced the Chriſtian Religion, had the audacity to aſſert openly, That Chriſt Jeſus *was not come in the fleſh* *—was never *really* inveſted with human nature,

* Οι μη ομολογουντες Ιησον Χριςον ερχομενον εν σαρκι. *John*, 2 *Epiſt. ver.* 7. Non enim aliud videbatur et aliud erat, ſicut

nature, but only exhibited to the world a visionary phantom, a shadowy representation of a real person. Two others, whose names St. *Paul* hath transmitted to us, by the dint of metaphysical subtilty attempted to explain away the doctrine of a future Resurrection—degrading it into a moral restoration—maintaining that it was *already past**, and had taken place in that great *Revolution*, and in that *Renovation* of heart and life which Christianity had *already* effected in the world. And by indulging these speculative reveries on one of the cardinal truths of the Christian scheme, *Hymenæus* and *Philetus* were not only able to impose upon *themselves*, but to seduce *others* into the belief of an Hypothesis, which one would think it impossible for any Christian, especially one who had been personally instructed by the Apostles, ever to espouse.

Nor did only some men, in the days of the Apostles, discover a disposition to *handle the word of God* DECEITFULLY, but to domineer and tyrannize over the consciences of others, and

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sicut inquiunt qui putativum introducunt, sed quod erat, hoc et videbatur. *Irenæus*, p. 160. *Edit. Grabe. Oxon.*

* 2 *Tim.* ii. 17, 18. Universam reprobant resurrectionem, et quantum in ipsis est, auferunt eam de medio. *Irenæus*, p. 451. *Grabe. Oxon.* 1702. See also *Clemens Alexandrinus*, p. 533. *Edit. Oxon.*

and who were inflated with ſuch ſpiritual pride and haughtineſs, as to arrogate to themſelves a liberty of diſputing even the wiſdom and authority of the Apoſtolic character. We read of one *Diotrephes*, who loved the preeminence *— affected a magiſterial direction over Chriſtians— and whoſe prieſtly ambition and inſolence, the amiable character of St. *John* could not ſoften and ſubdue into humility and love. The *myſtery of iniquity* began to *work* even in theſe times; and the Apoſtles themſelves beheld in the *diſpoſitions* and *tempers* of many of their converts, the foundation of that future EMPIRE laid, which like the *Roman* dominion, from the *ſmalleſt* beginnings gradually advanced in power and opulence, till it *finally* eſtabliſhed an *abſolute tyranny* over the conſciences and liberties of the whole Chriſtian world †.

Yet though it were eaſy to preſage, that men would depart from the ſimplicity of the goſpel, yet what Politician or Philoſopher, who beheld the plain garb, and heard the plain ſermons of the Apoſtles, and ſaw them employed in mending

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* Ο φιλοπρωτευων αυτων Διοτρεφης. *John*, 3d *Epiſt. ver.* 9.

† Dominatus ſacer, ſeu hierarchia, magis magiſque, ab initio quidem occulte, ſed mox manifeſte, ſtabiliretur; et tandem in monſtrum illud *Monarchiæ Romanæ* excreverit. *Bochmeri, Jus Eccleſ. Proteſtant.* p. 13. *Halæ*, 1720.

ing nets and making tents, could ever have conjectured that the ſucceſſors of theſe men would be *Popes* and *Cardinals*, *Patriarchs* and *Archbiſhops*—would exalt themſelves into ſecular Princes—uſurp the dominion of ſtates and kingdoms—rank themſelves with the firſt NOBILITY of their reſpective nations—take their ſeat in their ſupreme councils—climb with eager ſteps the precipice of worldly ambition—and employ their moſt anxious thoughts and cares in aggrandizing and enriching themſelves and their families! Who could ever have divined, that a riſing ſect, every where vilified and outraged, which was ſtruggling under all the incumbent weight of *Jewiſh* bigotry and *Pagan* ſuperſtition, and whoſe teachers were *deſtitute*, *afflicted*, *tormented*, would ever give birth to a Tyrant, *the man of ſin*, who would ſit and ſwell in the midſt of God's temple, oppoſe and aggrandize himſelf above all civil and imperial authority, claim the title of God, arrogate to himſelf divine honours, and be able to eſtabliſh himſelf on a throne of univerſal ſpiritual domination over the whole Chriſtian world, by means of forged miracles, pious frauds, lying wonders, and all the arts and artifice of the moſt diabolical impoſture! Who, that ſaw the low eſtate of the Chriſtian church in theſe unhappy times of perſecution, could ever have imagined, that

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it was then bearing under its zone *, and foſtering in its boſom ſuch a MONSTER of ambition and wickedneſs—that the cauſes, which in future time would exhibit this to the world, were then ſecretly operating—and that when a † *certain* impediment ſhould be removed, and the ſtate of the world be rendered propitious to its growth and proſperity, this MAN OF SIN would appear, and eſtabliſh himſelf in the plenitude of his ſpiritual uſurpation and tyranny.

I regard *Popery* as a ſyſtem of the greateſt corruption of Chriſtian truth, the moſt atrocious invaſion of the rights, liberties, and happineſs of mankind, and a conſtitution of the moſt refined and execrable policy, which the ſun ever beheld. But ſeveral ages flowed, before this *new* ſyſtem of power could eſtabliſh itſelf. The materials, indeed, for it had been gradually accumulating and conſtantly enlarging—but in a few centuries the world ſaw, with admiration, theſe materials arranged and united—and a moſt ſtately and magnificent fabric formed from the ingenious diſpoſition of them.

The *corruption* of truth is *progreſſive*. It advances from the ſlighteſt *infection* to the laſt *ſtages*

* Πως γαρ σ' εθρεψεν εντος, ω μιαιφονε,
Ζωντ; *Æſchyli Eumenides. verſ.* 610.

† The Roman Emperor.

ſtages of heretical pravity. In ſacred things, men, uſually, innovate at firſt with ſome degree of ſcrupulous timidity. Metaphyſical ſtratagem is employed in ſeizing and turning to its advantage ſome of the ſlighter out-works: the plain ſtrong fortreſs of truth it dares not aſſail. Many cauſes contributed their aid, a ſucceſſion of propitious times and propitious events united their influence, ultimately, to produce this laſt depravation of Chriſtian worſhip and doctrine, and firmly to eſtabliſh in the world an univerſal eccleſiaſtical empire.

One cauſe that principally conduced to form and finiſh this monarchy, which opened the largeſt avenue for it, and beſt prepared the world for the tame reception of it, was that general *reſignation* of man's *underſtanding* and *reaſon* in Religion, which we find obtained in the Chriſtian world in the times which immediately preceded this dire event. *It is certain, becauſe it is impoſſible*—is a maxim advanced by one of the moſt antient and venerable of the Fathers *. Men, who in the fulneſs of their hearts

* *The whole paſſage is very curious.* Crucifixus eſt Dei filius: non pudet, quia pudendum eſt. et mortuus eſt Dei filius: prorſus credibile eſt, quia ineptum eſt. et ſepultus reſurrexit: certum eſt, quia impoſſibile eſt. *Tertullian de carne Chriſti*, p. 361. *Edit. Rigaltii. Paris*, 1641.

hearts could ſay this, were prepared for any ſpiritual enormities. The ſublimer the myſtery, the greater was the heroiſm of faith. O the wonderful! O the marvellous!—This was the *Dulcinea*, this the beatific viſion of the Fathers! This amorous devotion employed their dreams by night, their dreams by day. Slumbering over the plain pages of Chriſtianity, they ſaw viſions, and dreamed dreams. They ſtamped upon it the ſacred image and ſuperſcription of MYSTERY, and made it current every where. They regarded Chriſtianity as tranſcending human reaſon—as deſigned to make an illuſtrious priſoner and everlaſting captive of it—and inſtead of examining it by its heavenly torch, they laboured to extinguiſh it, and by its extinction, to exalt and dignify the Chriſtian myſteries. One of the moſt plain and intelligible inſtitutions of the Chriſtian religion, they ſoon perverted into a *myſtery* *. He, who hath read the *Pilgrim's progreſs*, ſaith Mr. *Trenchard*, may be regarded as having read the *brighteſt* of the Fathers. They indulged a warm credulous fancy in matters of Religion—as we read them, we

* The *Lord's Supper* is frequently called a *myſtery*: See *Socratis Eccl. Hiſt.* p. 145. 249. 288, 289. *Edit. Reading.* See alſo *Sozomen Eccl. Hiſt.* p. 201. *Edit. Reading, Cantab.* 1720.

we find them, on particular ſubjects, mechanically raiſe themſelves into a lofty and extravagant train of devout extravagancies—and, tranſported like *Pindar*, by the rapturous extatic flights of an airy and boundleſs imagination, we ſee them leave all mortal things, all plain good ſenſe and reaſon and judgment, far, far below them *. They regarded not the wiſdom of faith, if they could but enjoy the enthuſiaſm of it. In theſe trances they miſtook the gaiety of their hearts for the atteſtation of heaven: the *jeu d'eſprit* for the influx of divine communication. Under this delirium they made the *plain* paſſages of ſcripture ſignify nothing, the *difficult* paſſages ſignify every thing. Plain moral paſſages were too cold to light the fire of devotion —they repaired with their lamp to the ſpeculative and controverſial parts—*theſe* plentifully ſupplied them both with fire and fewel.

Human *reaſon* diſclaimed, the native unalienable liberty of examining and judging for ourſelves, being thus wilfully ſacrificed at the altar of myſtery, the *next* progreſſion in this train of ſpiritual corruption, which facilitated the advancement of *Popery* now ruſhing forwards with rapid

* Negatâ tentat iter viâ:
Coetuſque vulgares et udam
Spernit humum fugiente pennâ. HORACE.

rapid and impatient ſteps, was the eſtabliſhment of *human* authority in matters of Religion, and appealing to men, and to illuſtrious bodies of men, for the deciſion of controverſy. To the voluntary abdication of the rights of *private judgment* ſucceeded the determination of *Fathers* and *Councils*, *Synods* and *Convocations*, *Creeds* and *Confeſſions*. There were few *Books* in thoſe days. The price of them was immenſe. Men of large fortunes only could form libraries. Common people were not equal to the expence of books. —They repoſed, therefore, an implicit confidence in their inſtructors, and were diſpoſed to follow wherever their ſpiritual guides were pleaſed to conduct them. The multitude took their ideas of Chriſtianity from the prieſt—warmly entered into his views and intereſts—and their ſoft and ductile minds *received* that *form* of doctrine which he *impreſſed* upon them. The people, moreover, complimented their prieſts with what was more valuable to them than *their* underſtandings: I mean, their purſes. Who ſeeth not, that theſe diſpoſitions among Chriſtians, and theſe procedures would in no long time produce a ſupreme Arbiter and Judge of Controverſy, in whoſe determinations they would generally chooſe to acquieſce. When the *ſcriptures* are deemed not to be ſufficiently

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clear and explicit, and Christians can persuade themselves, and persuade others to think, that they are not the sole rule and directory in faith and practice, not the supreme standard to which men are to conform their sentiments and conduct—*human* authority is at once established—the tenets of such and such wise and venerable men are triumphantly cited as giving their sanction to such and such an opinion—synods are convened—emperors and princes preside in them—creeds and formularies of faith are compiled and subscribed—and these confessions and articles of Christian belief, composed by an illustrious council of venerable men, and dignified with the Imperial sanction, are regarded as the * infallible tests of truth and error—and, for the future, heretical pravity is tried and condemned not by the scriptures, but by these authorized systems of an oecumenical orthodoxy.

Such was the brilliancy of these assemblies, so much was the pride of priests gratified on these illustrious occasions, such splendid opportunities did they minister to orators and declaimers, to rehearse panegyrics upon the Emperor,

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* Μηδεν γαρ ἕτερον ειναι ταυτην η Θεου γνωμην, εκ συμφωνιας τηλικουτων και τοσουτων αρχιερεων αγιῳ πνευματι συγασαν, μετα ζητησιν ακριβη και βασανον παντων των αμφιβολων δοκιμασθεισαν. *Sozomen*, p. 43. *Cantab.*

peror, to celebrate *his* orthodoxy, and to publiſh and ſubſcribe *their own*, that no wonder that theſe Fathers never for any long time *forgot the aſſembling of themſelves together*—even upon the moſt trifling incidents. Upon the advancement of the moſt puerile and contemptible reveries by any enthuſiaſt or whimſical ſpeculatiſt, a Synod was ſolemnly convoked, his errors were detailed and proſcribed, the poor man anathematized and depoſed, conſigned to poverty in this life, and damnation in the other.

On theſe great occaſions, the convocation of a general Council, the whole amplitude of the *Roman* dominions was in motion*—the Emperor's carriages were every where employed, and almoſt all the horſes in the Roman empire were haraſſed, experiencing on theſe public jubilees, as well as the *people*, what it was to be *prieſt-ridden*, in expediting the ſacred order to

* Των γουν εκκλησιων ἁπασων, αἱ την Ευρωπην ἁπασαν, Λιβυην τε και την Ασιαν επληρουν, ὁμου συνηκτο των του Θεου λειτουργων τα ακροθινια. εις τε οικος ευκτηριος, ωσπερ εκ Θεου πλατυνομενος, ενδον εχωρει κατα το αυτο Συρους τε και Κιλικας, Φοινικας τε και Αραβιους, και Παλαιστινους, και επι τουτοις Αιγυπτιους, Θηβαιους, Λιβυας, τους τε εκ μεσης των ποταμων ορμωμενους——Επισκοπων μεν πληθυς τριακοσιων αριθμον υπερακοντιζουσα ην. ἑπομενων δε τουτοις Πρεσβυτερων και Διακονων, Ακολουθων τε πλειστων ὁσων ετερων, ουδε ην αριθμος. *Socrates. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* 1. *Cap.* viii, p. 18, 19. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

to the place appointed for the general rendezvous. And when they were congregated, what ſuperior wiſdom they poſſeſſed to terminate controverſies, what excellent diſpoſitions they manifeſted to reconcile differences, what authority and inſpiration they enjoyed to ſuperſede and vacate the ſcriptural authority and inſpiration, let the faithful pages of hiſtory declare. The following incident holds up to the reader a faithful picture of the Fathers aſſembled in council. At one of the great General Synods, when a numerous Convocation of Chriſtian Biſhops were all bawling and quarrelling about the *Trinity*, an obſcure perſon begged again and again to be heard.—After long importunity, and with great difficulty this favour being obtained, he ſtood up before them—and, while the whole Synod expected to hear ſomething ingenious and deciſive concerning the *Homouſios*, in a grave and ſolemn voice he repeated the following paſſage from St. Paul: *The grace of God, that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godlily in this preſent world.*—But what was the conſequence,—He was univerſally hiſſed—Nobody knew him, or would own they knew him—They returned immediately to their clamours concerning the *Hypoſtatical Union, Eternal Generation, Everlaſt-*

ing Sonship, Necessary Emanation: abusing, calling names, and denouncing damnation one upon another, for not believing in these unintelligible and curious subtilties, just as they themselves believed. They brought their *private* quarrels and personal animosities and disagreements into these assemblies. An immense bundle of papers, filled with the overflowings of sacred bile, and containing an ample history of one bishop's pious resentment against another, was put into *Constantine*'s hands—which, after exhorting them to concord and union among *themselves*, he wisely destroyed *.

Of their calm deliberations and cool judicious conduct in these *Synods*, what a representation is given us by *Gregory Nazianzen*, who knew them well. He tells us, that they formed themselves into separate parties—that they were instigated to phrenzy in the middle of the Church—that they mutually accused each other, stimulated by the lust of ambition and priestly domination

* Αντεγκαλουντες ησαν αλληλοις οἱ πλειονες. πολλοι τε εξ αυτων βιβλια δεησεων τῳ βασιλει τῃ προτερεια ησαν οριξαντες. επι δε το προκειμενον, διο και συνεληλυθεισαν, χωρειν παρακαλεσας, τα βιβλια καυθηναι εκελευσιν. *Socrates. Eccl. Hist. Lib.* 1. *Cap.* 8. p. 20. *Vid. etiam Sozomen, Lib.* 1. *Cap.* 17. p. 35. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

nation—and inveighed against each other with such virulence and fury, as if they would have torn the whole world in pieces *. Accordingly, from the tumult and confusion, that reigned in these assemblies, which convened to restore Theological tranquillity in the whole Christian world, this Father deliberately formed this resolve—" As long as I live, I will never sit in " these Synods of geese and cranes, which are " thus eternally quarrelling and fighting with " one another. From these Convocations arise " strife, contests and scandals unknown be- " fore †."

The *Trinity* is the pretence, says he in another place, but in reality it is implacable hatred which instigates them ‡. O how excellently qualified were these men to give *validity* and *authority* to Religious principles, to usurp dominion over the faith and consciences of Christians,

* Gregor. Nazian. de vita suâ, *Vol.* 2. p. 25. *Colon.* 1690.

† Ουδε τι που συνοδοισιν ομοθρονος εσσομ' εγωγε
Χηνων η γερανων ακριτα μαρναμενων.
Ενθ' ερις, ενθα μοθος τε, και αισχεα κρυπτα παροιθεν.
Ibid. p. 81.

‡ Και προφασις Τριας εστι; το δ' ατρεκες, εχθος απιστον.
Ibid. p. 84.

tians, and to ſettle the varying opinions of the whole contending world.

Another thing which conduced to cloud and obſcure the luſtre of *ſcriptural* truth, was thoſe fanciful allegories and myſtical interpretations which the learned of thoſe times were ſo ingenious in diſcovering. He was eſteemed the beſt Critic and the moſt edifying and profitable Expounder, who produced the moſt brilliant fancies of this kind. As the interpreters and admirers of *Homer* and *Virgil* have diſcovered beauties in their immortal compoſitions of which thoſe poets themſelves had no idea; ſo the moſt plain hiſtorical narrative in the Old Teſtament was replete with recondite and myſterious ſenſes, known only to the ſpiritual and divinely illuminated. The literal ſenſe was too cold and jejune for theſe myſtics—they ſearched for the Allegory as for *hid treaſure*. The *letter* killed them, the *ſpirit* made them alive. To give a few examples of the manner in which the *Fathers* expounded the ſcriptures. We read that *Abraham* circumciſed 318 of his houſhold. In this myſtic number St. *Barnabas*, one of the earlieſt of the *Fathers*, diſcovers *Jeſus* and the *croſs*. The letter, T, in *Greek* ſtands for 300, and is a *ſymbol* of the *croſs* of Chriſt: and the number 18 is in the ſame language expreſſed by two letters which

which form the *first* syllable in *Jesus* *. This circumcision, therefore, says the holy Father, was spiritual. The patriarch in this transaction had respect to Jesus. Being favoured with the spiritual meaning of these THREE LETTERS, he circumcised †! The *two* letters manifestly indicate the name of *Jesus*, the letter, T, represents his *cross* ‡!—*His* GOVERNMENT *shall be upon his* SHOULDERS. This text *Justin Martyr* ingeniously interprets to be a clear intended manifestation of the *cross* which our *Lord* bore on his *shoulders* ||, when he suffered on Calvary. The *twelve* bells, which were annexed to the vestment of the Jewish highpriest, denoted the *twelve* Apostles §. The *Ass* and her *fole*, which were

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* Και περιετεμεν Αβρααμ εκ του οικου αυτου ανδρας δεκα και οκτω και τριακοσιους. τις ουν ἡ δωθεισα αυτῳ γνωσις; μαθετε τους δεκαοκτω πρωτους, ειτα τους τριακοσιους. το δε δεκα και οκτω, Ι. δεκα, Η. οκτω. εχεις Ιησουν. ὁτι δε ταυρος εν τῳ, Τ. κ. λ. *Barnabæ Epistola*, p. 55. *Edit. Oxon.* 1685.

† Αβρααμ ὁ πρωτος περιτομην δους εν πνευματι, προβλεψας εις τον Ιησουν, περιετεμε λαβων τριων γραμματων δογματα. p. 54. *Edit. Oxon.*

‡ Δηλοι ουν μεν Ιησουν εν τοις δυσι γραμμασι, και εν ενι τον ταυρον. *Ibid.* p. 57.

|| Ου ἡ αρχη επι των ωμων. μηνυτικον της δυναμεως του ταυρου, ῳ προσεθηκε τους ωμους ταυρωθεις. *Justin Martyr. Apol. secunda.* p. 76. *Edit. Paris.* 1636.

§ Αλλα και το δωδεκα κωδωνας εξηφθαι του ποδηρους του αρχιερεως των δωδεκα Αποστολων των εξαφθεντων απο της δυναμεως του αιωνιου

were found together at the place where two ways met, typified the *union* of Jews and Gentiles *. The *three* days before the creation of the two great luminaries, ſays *Theophilus*, repreſent the *Trinity* †. The *three* ſpies whom *Raab* received and honoured, according to *Irenæus*, myſtically ſignify *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt* ‡. Chriſt waſhing the diſciples' feet was a ſymbolical action, deſigned to intimate that he waſhed away the filth of the daughters of *Sion* ‖. Nothing eſcaped their genius. They ſpiritualized every thing—*Noah*'s ark §—The number of *Abraham*'s ſervants ¶—The *two* loaves in the parable **.—The hands of *Moſes*, which were elevated

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αιωνιου ιερεως Χριςου, δι ων της φωνης ἡ πασα γη της δοξης και χαριτος του Θεου και του Χριςου αυτου επληρωθη, συμβολον ην. *Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 122. *Edit. Jebb. Lond.* 1719.

* *Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 154. *Jebb.* 1719.

† Αι τρεις ἡμεραι των φωςηρων γεγονυιαι, τυποι εισιν της Τριαδος. *Theophilus ad Autolycum. Lib.* 2. p. 106. *Edit. Oxon.* 1684.

‡ Suſcepit autem [Raab] *tres* ſpeculatores, qui ſpeculabantur univerſam terram, et apud ſe abſcondit Patrem, ſcilicet, et Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum. *Irenæus. Lib.* 4. p. 336, 337. *Grabe. Oxon.* 1702.

‖ Ipſum Verbum per ſeipſum ſordes abluit filiarum Sion, manibus ſuis lavans pedes diſcipulorum. *Irenæus. Lib.* 4. *Cap.* 39. p. 338. *Edit. Oxon.*

§ Clemens Alexandrinus, p. 783. *Edit. Potter.*

¶ *Ibid.* p. 782.

** *Ibid.* p. 787.

elevated when *Israel* fought with *Amalek*, prefigured the *cross* *—Moses *holding up* his *hands* till the *evening*, presignified that Christ was to continue on the cross till the *evening* †. These curiosities shew us, in what ‡ manner the scriptures were studied in those days—with what success Biblical erudition was cultivated, and what improvements the *rational* knowledge of the scriptures had then acquired. These mystical dreams, these pious puns upon words, this deceitful handling of the word of God, by allegorizing almost every thing in it, and spiritualizing the plainest passages to give a sanction and stability to the idlest fancies and reveries, naturally paved the way for the most portentous absurdities, which the human fancy could form, *A triple Unity*, and the *transmutation* of a *little bread* into a compleat human body. When men renounce their understanding, nothing is absurd. By the dint of fancy, men may bring their minds to such a state as to behold in the *simplicity* of scriptural narrative, nothing but types

* *Justin Martyr. Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 273. *Edit. Jebb.*

† *Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 288, 289. *Edit. Jebb. Lond.* 1719.

‡ Adeo ut in illis temporibus *ingeniosa res* fuit esse *Christianum*, says *Erasmus*.

types and ſhadows, myſtical forms and phantoms, unintelligible ſubtilties, inexplicable myſteries, faint ſketches and ſlight adumbrations of favourite ſyſtems and ſentiments. This religious deluſion was then attended, as it always will be attended, with the moſt fatal conſequences to Religion, Liberty, and Learning. Amidſt theſe dreams of myſticiſm and enthuſiaſm the empire of the *man of ſin* aroſe, a ſpiritual Hierarchy arrogated to itſelf the unalienable privilege of interpreting ſcripture, and induced a blind infatuated people abjectly to acquieſce in this uſurped authority, and to ſubmit their faith, their conſciences and their fortunes to Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction.

The converſion of *Conſtantine* produced very unhappy conſequences to Chriſtianity and its teachers. Whether this converſion were *real* or merely *political* artifice, God only knows. The appearance of a *luminous* croſs in the air, with an inſcription annexed to it, is very ſuſpicious—cauſes the cool and ſerious enquirer after truth to heſitate—it certainly hath all the marks of a pious forgery and political fraud. The Chriſtians had long been a very numerous body. Their religion had extended to the utmoſt verge of the Roman territories. The cities, towns, provinces, iſlands, in all parts of their dominions,

nions, were full of Chriſtians*. Chriſtianity had penetrated into the forum, ſenate, and palace itſelf. The temples were almoſt deſerted. *Conſtantine* could not but know, that by publickly profeſſing his belief of Chriſtianity, and publiſhing the ſupernatural manner of his converſion to it, he ſhould immediately gain a very zealous and ſpirited body of men, whoſe numbers and animation would render him ſuperior to all his preſent competitors for the empire. Theſe might be his views. Heaven only knows how it was. The phænomenon of a croſs in the ſky, round which he declared that he ſaw inſcribed, *By this ſhalt thou conquer*, is a thing very disfavourable to his ſincerity. It has all the features of a *Popiſh* Legend, or of a ſolemn *Mohammedan* tale. It was not the age of miracles. They had long been withdrawn. Centuries before the reign of this Emperor Chriſtianity had made a moſt rapid and aſtoniſhing progreſs in the world merely by the dint of its intrinſic evidences, and the divine excellence of

* Heſterni ſumus et veſtra omnia implevimus, urbes, inſulas, caſtella, municipia, conciliabula, caſtra ipſa, tribus, decurias, palatium, ſenatum, forum, ſola vobis relinquimus templa. *Tertullian Apol.* p. 33. *Edit. Rigalt. Paris.* 1641. In agris, in caſtellis, in inſulis, Chriſtianos: omnem ſexum, ætatem, conditionem, et jam dignitatem tranſgredi ad hoc nomen. *Ibid.* p. 1.

of its doctrines, morals, and discoveries. The event manifested that *Constantine* judged wisely as a *politician*, in gaining over to his party the Christians by this stratagem, if it were a stratagem. The Christians were firmly attached to him—they idolized and adored him as the patron of their religion and the distinguished favourite of heaven—protested he was the greatest and best character that ever existed *—applied the accomplishment of certain antient prophecies to him †—compared him to the Almighty ‡—compared his *three* sons *Constantine*, *Constantius*, and *Constans* to the ever-blessed *Trinity* ||—and *Eusebius*, in the fulness of his heart, in an elaborate panegyric which he composed, and which he pronounced before him, tells him, that God Almighty was not unworthy to be his historian § ! *Constantine*'s character merited not these extravagant

* Ουτε παρ' Ελλησιν ουτε παρα Βαρβαροις, ουδε γε παρ' αυτοις τοις ανωτατω Ρωμαιοις, ουδενος τοιουτου τινος εις ημας εκ του παντος αιωνος μνημονευομενου. *Eusebius de Vitâ Constantini. Lib.* 4. *Cap.* 75. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

† *Eusebius de Vitâ Constantini. Lib.* iii. *Cap.* iii. p. 577. 721. 768. *Edit. Reading.*

‡ *Eusebii Oratio de Laudibus Constantini*, p. 735.

|| Τριαδος λογῳ τριτης γονην παιδων θεοφιλη κτησαμενος. *Eusebius de Vitâ Constantini. Lib.* iv. *Cap.* xl. p. 648.

§ Θεος μεν ουν αυτον και συν ημιν ετι ονται τον μακαριον θεοπρεπεσιν ὑψωσας τιμαις και τελευτωντα κοσμησας εξαιρετοις τοις παρ' αυτου

extravagant eulogies. His life exhibits no distinguished proofs either of superior wisdom or superior virtue. However, he greatly caressed the Clergy, and on some occasions demeaned himself, and abjectly descended from his imperial dignity to express his veneration for them. I refer, particularly, to his behaviour to a Confessor, whose eye had been struck out in some of the preceding persecutions—*Constantine* received him—embraced him—and kissed the hollow socket with great devotion * !

The distributions he lavished among the Christians were very prejudicial to their virtue. His prodigality knew no bounds. He enriched the Bishops, and endowed their churches. From this epoch a torrent of avarice, ambition, and worldly-mindedness poured into the sanctuary. Before this unhappy period Christianity had ever been militating not only against *flesh and blood*, the common prejudices and prepossessions of mankind, but against *principalities* and *powers*, and all the confederate influence of priests and princes—and though unsupported by the secular arm,

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αυτου πλεονεκτημασι, γενοιτ' αν αυτου και γραφευς. *Eusebius de Vitâ Constantini. Lib.* i. *Cap.* ix. p. 503. *Edit. Cantab.*

* Τον εξορωρυγμενον οφθαλμον κατεφιλει. τοσαυτη προσιν τω βασιλει Κωνσταντινω ευλαβεια. *Socrates. Eccl. Hist. Lib.* i. *Cap.* xi. p. 38. *Edit. Cantab.*

arm, ſtripped of all ſecular emoluments, and outraged and perſecuted with every form of contumely and cruelty, both by *Jews* and *Heathens*, yet it flouriſhed, it enlarged its empire, it ſpread with amazing velocity from one country to another, and eſtabliſhed itſelf, immoveably, in the hearts and principles of mankind. This was the golden age of ſincerity and virtue. In ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with *fleſhly wiſdom*, they had their converſation in the world. Their views were intenſely fixed upon another and better world, and inſtead of aſpiring after earthly honours and diſtinctions, court favour and court intereſt, they regarded this vain and tranſitory life, and all its grandeur and greatneſs with a Chriſtian indifference, and took joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring ſubſtance. O what a dire reverſe did the age of *Conſtantine*, and the ſubſequent centuries, behold! Biſhops contending with each other for the richeſt ſees—*ſome* excommunicated and depoſed—*others* eſtabliſhed in their places by dint of military violence—the churches, on theſe tragical occaſions, filled with armed ſoldiers—and hundreds and thouſands butchered in theſe religious tumults. Eſtabliſhments are the peſt of piety, the bane of religious ſincerity. The air of courts is fatal to virtue. I forget who

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it was, that ſaid, That no one can ſtep over the threſhold of a court and come out an honeſt man. As cities are the graves of the human ſpecies, ſo courts are the ſepulchres of truth and honeſty. The incenſe which *Conſtantine* and his court were continually burning under the noſtrils of the prieſthood, intoxicated them with its fumes. For the love of truth, the luſt of gold; for harmony, peace and charity, a delight in endleſs diſcord and conteſt, and all the bitterneſs of Theological odium, through the whole Chriſtian world, now miſerably predominated. The *Trinity* is the pretence, ſays *Gregory Nazianzen*, but it is the love of vain-glory, the luſt of gold, which have blinded our eyes. The contention and diſcord is, concerning the richeſt ſees: it is for theſe they haraſs and divide the whole world *.

In this age of corruption and ſacerdotal ambition roſe and flouriſhed ATHANASIUS. In *Alexandria* a dire controverſy, from the ſmalleſt beginnings, had lately been kindled, which ſoon ſpread its flames throughout the whole Roman dominions, and miſerably deſolated the church of

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* Τοσσος ερως φασεσσιν επηχλυσεν ἡμετεροισι
Η δοξης κενεας, η κτησεος, η φθονος αινος.
——— Αντι θρονων, ων περι μαρναμενοι
Σχιζονται, και κοσμον ολον τεμνουσιν αθεσμως.

of Chriſt. *Alexander*, the biſhop of this city, one day *philoſophizing* * on the *Trinity*, before his preſbyters and deacons, aſſerted that there was an *unity* in the ſacred *three*. *Arius*, one of the preſbyters, who was preſent, deemed this metaphyſical notion, which the good biſhop now advanced, to be *Sabellianiſm* †—and with ſome warmth oppoſed this ſentiment—maintaining that ſince the Father *begot* the Son, the Son muſt have a *beginning* of his exiſtence, and conſequently that there was a time when the Son had no exiſtence. This produced great vehemence on both ſides. The biſhop proceeded to excommunication—depoſed *Arius* and his party and expelled them from the church—wrote circular letters to the biſhops not to receive any of them, but ſhun them as the enemies of God ‡.

I know not by what ſiniſter fatality it is that almoſt all the meaſures and expedients which prieſts, in all ages and nations, have employed to exterminate hereſy, have defeated themſelves, and proved the means of propagating thoſe very opinions they have laboured to aboliſh. This ſolemn

* Ει Τριαδι μοναδα ειναι ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΩΝ εθεολογει. *Socrates. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* i. *Cap.* v. p. 9. *Edit. Cantab.*

† Οιομενοι το Σαβελλιου του Λιβυος δογμα εισηγεισθαι τον επισκοπον. *Ibid.*

‡ Ως θεομαχους και φθορεας των ψυχων αποστρεφεσθαι. *Socrates*, p. 14. *Cantab.*

ſolemn and public excommunication and depoſition of *Arius* and his friends, inſtead of extirpating their principles from the Chriſtian church, greatly contributed to diffuſe and eſtabliſh them. The ſanctuary of Jeſus, which he deſigned ſhould be conſecrated to harmony and love, was now every where a ſcene of theological diſputation and wrangling. The ſacred dome every where reſounded with *begotten* and *unbegotten*, *con-ſubſtantial*, *co-equal* and *co-eternal*, *hypoſtatical union*, *eternal generation*, *eternal proceſſion*, and a thouſand other philoſophical and unintelligible terms and expreſſions which the metaphyſical genius and logical ſubtilty of the *Greeks* invented and contended for.

At firſt the evil only ſeized Alexandria—but it quickly pervaded all *Egypt* and *Libya* *—and at laſt penetrated to the utmoſt boundaries of the *Roman* dominions. While this calamity was but yet in its infancy, and had, comparatively, produced no great enormities, *Conſtantine*, ever watchful over the Chriſtian church, and aſſiduous in maintaining the unanimity of Chriſtians, in his great wiſdom imagined, that an *eſtabliſhed*

* Αρξαμενον τε το κακον απο της Αλεξανδρειας εκκλησιας, διεπρεχε την συμπασαν Αιγυπτον τε και Λιβυην, και την ανω Θηβαιδα, ηδη δε και τας λοιπας επιναμετο επαρχιας τε και πολεις. *Socrates. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* i. *Cap.* vi. p. 10. *Edit. Reading.*

eſtabliſhed Formulary drawn up and ſubſcribed by a number of the moſt eminent and reſpectable of the biſhops, would prove the beſt expedient he could employ to ſtop the progreſs of an evil which menaced the ſubverſion of every thing, great and good, and happy in his empire. Accordingly, a SYNOD, conſiſting of three hundred and twelve biſhops, convened at *Nice*, in order to ſettle the faith of the univerſal church, and give their ghoſtly ſanction to a ſymbol, in which the whole Chriſtian world were expected to acquieſce as infallible.

In this *oecumenical* council *Athanaſius* diſtinguiſhed himſelf*. Here he ſtepped forth from the crowd, and exhibited proofs of that petulant declamation and controverſial rhetoric which mark his character and all his writings. A ſolemn anathema is pronounced upon *Arius* and his party—he is condemned to perpetual exile by an imperial edict—and his opinions and writings declared to be blaſphemous.

The character of *Athanaſius*, who appears to be the very life and ſoul of this ſyſtem, is thus repreſented by Dr. *Clayton*, the late eminently

* Εξ εκεινου δε και Αθανασιος ὁ Αλεξανδειας ετι τοτε διακονος, Αλεξανδρῳ τῳ επισκοπῳ συνων, πλειστον ειναι εδοξε μερος της περι ταυτα σπουδης. *Sozomen. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* i. *Cap.* xvii. p. 36. *Edit. Cantab.*

nently learned and worthy *Bishop* of *Clogher*. "Athanasius was a young, forward, petulant deacon in the church of Alexandria, of an ambitious spirit, with a talent fitted for disputation. And as he could have no hopes of getting into that bishopric, unless he could drive Arius out of Alexandria, who was the principal presbyter in that church, next to the bishop; this he effected, by fomenting this dispute about the Trinity, between Arius and the bishop; on which account, having got Arius excommunicated, he had him then banished out of Alexandria. Which when done, no sooner was the old bishop Alexander dead, but Athanasius, though then only a young man of about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age, by a set of murdering Ascetics, forced himself at once into that high archbishopric, without ever passing through any of the intermediate degrees. And having gotten himself illegally consecrated, contrary to all the rules and canons of the church, he prevailed on the emperor Constantine to confirm him therein, by the power of bribes, that were given to one of the emperor's favourites. And no sooner was he thoroughly established in it, but he immediately flew in the emperor's face. And when the emperor Constantine was dead, treated his son and successor Constantius with more contempt and insolence

than could have been borne from an equal. And when he was dispossessed of his bishopric for other irregularities, by a numerous council of bishops, regularly summoned and assembled, he forced his way into that see again, more than once or twice, over the murdered corpses of his antagonists; and waded into his cathedral, through seas of blood *."

The famous system of faith having been compiled, on this occasion, at *Nice*, by the composition, subscription, and establishment of which *human* authority was exalted above the *divine*, and by which the doctrine of scripture and the determination of Christ and his Apostles was publickly and illustriously judged not to be *sufficiently* clear and explicit, and to be totally inefficient to form the faith and principles of Christians; this Creed became the source of the most extensive and fatal mischief to the honour, interests, and happiness of the church. For in no long time, thousands and millions began to regard this SYMBOL as infallible—to venerate the authority of those who composed it—asserted that they were under the special influence and direction of the

* See the *Bishop of Clogher*'s speech made in the house of *Lords* in *Ireland*, first *printed* in the year 1756, and reprinted in the *third* Volume of the *Cordial for low spirits*.

the Holy Ghoſt *, when they framed it—and, in fine, contended for it ſo warmly and ſo ſtrenuouſly that in the explication of the *Trinity* they diſparaged the ſcripture in compariſon of it, exalting, as it is not unuſual to do, the *commentary* above the *original*. They appealed to this *Formulary*, they cited it as an impeccable and ſupreme ſtandard of orthodoxy †, and anathematized and condemned thoſe who heſitated to aſſert and ſubſcribe to its doctrines. Hence diſcord, confuſion, and every enormity.

From this æra almoſt every page in Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is ſtained with blood. Biſhops depoſed by armed ſoldiers—introduced into their cathedrals by armed ſoldiers—the altar ſprinkled and defiled with Chriſtian blood—and ambitious Prelates and Eccleſiaſtics, loſt to all ſenſe of honour and humanity, with eager and impatient ſteps, over the dead and dying, ruſhing into the ſanctuary.

This

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* Το κεφαλαιον, γνωμην Θεου, την παντων των εκει συνελθοντων γνωμην καλει, και πνευματι αγιῳ, των τοσουτων και τηλικουτων επισκοπων την ὁμοφωνιαν γενεσθαι ουκ απιστει. *Socrates. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* i. p. 31. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

† Τῶν εν Νικαιᾳ δοκιμασθεισαν ὑπο τριακοσιων δεκα και οκτῳ ορθοδοξων επισκοπων. ἡτις την τελειαν περιεχει ἀληθειαν, και παντα τα των αἱρετικων πληθη επιστομιζει τε και ανετρεπει. ουδε γαρ απο ταυτοματου, αλλα Θειῳ νευματι, ὁ των τοσουτων ἀριθμος επισκοπων συνηκροτηθη. *Ibid.* p. 227.

This temper and taste for metaphysical disputation, this passion for Creeds and Creed-making, this wisdom in exalting *human* prescriptions into *divine* fundamentals, and this infernal zeal in excommunicating, anathematizing, exiling, and persecuting one another, in consequence of their reception or rejection of certain established systems and sentiments, arrived at length at such an enormous height of absurdity and wickedness, and superseded so effectually all regard to the authority of scripture in the decision of controversies, till, at *last*, the Christian world was corrupted to that deplorable degree as to render it even capable of enjoying, and of receiving into its most solemn services, the following SYMBOL, as containing a clear and faithful exhibition of the creed of a Christian.

" Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith.

Which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholick Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

For

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal;

And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty;

And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God;

And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

So likewiſe the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghoſt Lord;

And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Chriſtian verity: to acknowledge every Perſon by himſelf to be God and Lord;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion: to ſay, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghoſt is of the Father, and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghoſt, not three Holy Ghoſts.

And in this Trinity none is afore or after other: none is greater or leſs than another;

But the whole three Perſons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforeſaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worſhipped.

He therefore that will be ſaved: muſt thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore,

Furthermore, it is neceſſary to everlaſting ſalvation: that he alſo believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confeſs: that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, is God and Man;

God, of the Subſtance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Subſtance of his mother, born in the world;

Perfect God, and perfect man: of a reaſonable ſoul, and human fleſh ſubſiſting;

Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood;

Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Chriſt.

One; not by converſion of the Godhead into fleſh: but by taking of the Manhood into God;

One altogether; not by confuſion of Subſtance: but by unity of Perſon.

For as the reaſonable ſoul and fleſh is one Man: ſo God and Man is one Chriſt:

Who ſuffered for our ſalvation: deſcended into hell, roſe again the third day from the dead.

He aſcended into heaven, he ſitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty: from whence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works.

And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

A *thousand* years had flowed from the incarnation of Jesus Christ, before his church arrived at *that* degree of spiritual corruption and darkness as to admit this Creed into its *public services.* * It was a pious fraud and forgery of the dark ages. There is no mention of it before the 8th century. The learned *Vossius*, in his *Treatise on the three Creeds*, hath detected and well exposed this base illegitimate offspring. It was fathered upon *Athanasius* to give it a sanction and sacredness, and procure it reception among Christians. But *Athanasius* himself knew nothing † of any such ænigma, nor any one who lived four hundred years after him.—It was a glorious accession

to

* Nec, in Ecclesiis ante annum millesimum obtinuerit. *Cave Hist. Literaria. Vol.* i. p. 146. *Edit. Lond.* 1688.

† Genuinum Athanasii opus *non* esse satis indicat, quòd nec ipse Athanasius, nec sequentium sæculorum scriptor aliquis—ejus meminerit. *Ibid.* p. 146.

to the Church of *Rome*, a church, which ever delighted in ſpiritual myſtery and mummery. In the *thirteenth* century, when darkneſs univerſal covered both prieſt and people, the *Legate* of Pope *Gregory* the IXth in a public diſpute at *Conſtantinople*, appealed to this ſymbol, and pleaded the authority of Athanaſius. *Cave's Hiſt. Lit.* p. 146.

In the church of *Rome* this ſymbol is regarded as the ſtandard of orthodoxy, and the moſt faithful and beſt exhibition of the faith of a Chriſtian. In a *Spaniſh* play, an unenlightened Heathen and a Prieſt are introduced—the Prieſt manifeſted a ſtrong deſire to make the poor man a Chriſtian—and what method do you think, reader, the Prieſt employs to effect this great and ſalutary work? The good Catholic piouſly and ſolemnly rehearſes to him the whole Athanaſian creed, in order to tranſlate him from *Pagan darkneſs* into the *light* of the goſpel. If one may hazard a conjecture from the expedient here uſed, I ſuppoſe it might be by ſolemnly reiterating *Father uncreate, Son uncreate, and Holy Ghoſt uncreate: Father incomprehenſible, Son incomprehenſible, and Holy Ghoſt incomprehenſible: Father eternal, Son eternal, Holy Ghoſt eternal, and yet there are not* THREE *eternals but* ONE *eternal: not three Almighties but one Almighty.* It was, I ſuppoſe, by the ſolemn mumbling of this

this ſtrange jargon, that the *Spaniards* converted the *Mexicans* *.

It is very melancholy, that this moſt abſurd, ſpurious, and uncharitable ſymbol was not proſcribed by our *Reformers*. To their everlaſting honour it redounds that they retrenched ſo many abſurdities, but it is to be lamented that they held the ſalutary knife with ſo tender and timid an hand. It is pity, but along with *Tranſubſtantiation* they had eradicated its ſiſter abſurdity, the Athanaſian *Trinity*. But it affords matter of the laſt aſtoniſhment and grief, that in the PRESENT AGE of *knowledge* and of *charity*, when the Chriſtian Revelation is ſo well underſtood, and Chriſtians of different denominations cheriſh ſuch benevolent and friendly affections for one another, that thouſands and millions of intelligent, ſerious, and charitable people can really accommodate their underſtandings and hearts to mutter, in the worſhip of Almighty God, ſuch an unintelligible riddle and rhapſody as, *Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity: One* Father not *three* Fathers: *One* Son, not *three* Sons: *One* Holy Ghoſt, not *three* Holy Ghoſts: None *afore* or *after* another: None is *greater* or *leſs* than another: The Father, God: The

* *Los dos Amantes del Cielo de Don Pedro Calderon. Vol.* v. *Edit. Madrid.*

The Son, God: The Holy Ghoſt, God: and yet there are not *three* Gods but *one* God: Father, Lord: Son, Lord: Holy Ghoſt, Lord: and yet there are not *three* Lords, but *one* Lord—can pervert their minds and hearts to believe that THIS is the CATHOLIC FAITH, which except a man believe faithfully he will undoubtedly ſuffer everlaſting damnation! It may afford a ſerious queſtion, Whether all the horrid imprecations and oaths, which are ſworn by our ſoldiers and ſailors and low people, be ſo offenſive to Almighty God, to Jeſus Chriſt, and ſuperior ſpirits, as the ſolemn recitation of this idolatrous and uncharitable ſymbol. Myriads and millions repeat it, in the awful preſence of Almighty God, who do not *heartily* join in the expreſſions and ſentiments of it—either *diſlike* its ſtrange explication of the doctrine of the Trinity, or ſincerely *diſapprove* the damnatory clauſes. The thought of this is very diſtreſſing to a good mind. What devotion can there be, what acceptable ſervice can that prove, where the *underſtanding* of the votary is affronted and hurt by the terms in which it is expreſſed, and the *ſoul* of the worſhipper doth not really approve the forms the lips are uttering.

The compoſition of *three* diſtinct beings into *one* individual perſon—and the reſolution, again, of this *one* undivided perſon into *three* ſeparate

ſubſiſtencies

ſubſiſtencies—is not this more like the *logic* of *Duns Scotus*, is not this rather the language of *chymiſtry* than of that *plain* religion, which was preached to the poor? And the mumbling a number of unintelligible ſounds — aſſerting ſtrongly a metaphyſical poſition, and then retracting and contradicting what one had aſſerted —declaring the Father to be eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghoſt eternal—and, in the ſame breath, ſolemnly averring that there are *not* three eternals—that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Spirit God, and yet that there are *not* three Gods but one; God of the ſubſtance of the Father, Man of the ſubſtance of his Mother; perfect God and perfect man; *equal* to the Father, *inferior* to the Father; yet not *two* but *one*; *one*, not by confuſion of ſubſtance but unity of perſon—does not this reſemble rather the *Abracadabra* of magic ſkill and incantation, ſound more like the gibberiſh of *Canidia*, and appear rather to be ſome occult form and act of *Necromancy* than the language of that divine Religion, whoſe diſtinguiſhing character is ſimplicity and perſpicuity?

Tranſubſtantiation is harmleſs when compared with this. Tranſubſtantiation is only playing a few ſly tricks of ſpiritual chymiſtry in one of the *poſitive* ordinances of our Religion—But the Athanaſian impiety of three co-equal, conſub-

ſtantial

ſtantial Gods, ſtrikes at the very FOUNDATION of all natural and revealed Religion, the real unity and ſupremacy of Almighty God. I regard this with horror, as one of the greateſt corruptions of plain genuine Chriſtianity, as derogating from the honour of the Supreme God, aſſociating with him *two other* co-ordinate Beings of *equal* perfection, and worſhipping theſe *two Beings* as equally poſſeſſed of neceſſary exiſtence, power, knowledge, immenſity, and eternity. For in this Trinity there is none *afore* or *after* another: no priority: no precedence: no ſuperiority of one perſon to another. The Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghoſt Almighty. The Father is Lord, the Son Lord, the Holy Ghoſt Lord. So that the Son might have ſent the Father, or, the Holy Ghoſt might have ſent the Son. For the *three* perſons form one individual trinity, equal in ſupremacy, and all the perfections of Godhead. Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity.

Theſe ſpiritual riddles gave occaſion to *Lord* BACON to draw up the following definition of a Chriſtian, meaning, a Chriſtian according to the ſentiments of Athanaſius. "A Chriſtian is one that believes things his reaſon cannot comprehend—He believes three to be one, and one to be three; a Father not to be older than

his

his Son; a Son to be equal to his Father; and one proceeding from both, to be equal with both; he believing three persons in one nature, and two natures in one person *."

The doctrine of *three* self-existent, three consubstantial, undivided Beings, equal in wisdom, power, and eternity, throws confusion over all our ideas. The *Heathens*, in the whole compass of their Theology, had nothing so absurd. We find none of their *Philosophers* and *Metaphysicians* playing such tricks with the essence and subsistence of *their* Trinity, *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, and *Pluto*, among whom they imagined universal empire to be divided. In the sublimest of his visions *Plato* never saw these *three* great Intelligences compressed into *one*, and forming, by an inexplicable union, one sole supreme consubstantial Divinity. The only fabulous resemblance to the *Athanasian* Trinity, which occurs in the *Pagan* mythology, is in the person of *Geryon*, who had *three* bodies conjoined and united in *one* †, in an ineffable manner.

The

* *Lord Bacon*'s Works, *Vol.* iii. p. 504.

† *Tergeminus* Geryon.

—Forma *tricorporis* umbræ. *Virgil. Æneid.* 6. ver. 289.

————Pastoris Iberi

Forma triplex. Ovid. Met. Lib. ix. *vers.* 184.

Quidve

The ſcripture mentions no ſuch Being as the *Trinity*. The word is unknown to Prophets and Apoſtles. Our Lord never prayed to the Trinity, never commanded us to pray to the Trinity. *Luther* in his *Poſtil. Major. Dominic.* ſays, "The word *Trinity* ſounds oddly, and is an human invention: It were better to call Almighty God, GOD, than Trinity." The expreſſions of *Calvin* in *Admonit.* I. *ad Polonos*, are equally remarkable for their freedom and plainneſs. "I like not this Prayer; O holy, bleſſed, and glorious Trinity! It ſavours of barbarity: the word *Trinity* is barbarous, inſipid, profane, an human invention, grounded on no teſtimony of God's word, the POPISH GOD, unknown to prophets and apoſtles *." There is not recorded in ſcripture one ſingle prayer or one ſingle act of worſhip addreſſed to the Holy Ghoſt. This is unaccountable, if he poſſeſs the ſame ſupremacy and dignity of nature as the Father. There is not the moſt diſtant hint

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Quidve tripectora *tergemini* vis Geryonäi.

Lucret. Lib. v. *verſ.* 28.

The Pagan *Hecate* is alſo repreſented in the ſame myſterious manner as the Athanaſian Trinity.

Triformis Hecate. *Triceps* Hecate.

Ora vides Hecates in tres vergentia partes.

Ovid. Faſt. Lib. i. *ver.* 141.

* *See Monthly Review for October*, 1754. p. 257.

hint in ſcripture that the Holy Ghoſt is to be worſhipped—no intimation that he forms *one ſide* of that myſterious *Triangle**, a figure by which this union is commonly repreſented, and by which ſymbol the minds of Chriſtian people are filled with groſs and falſe ideas.

It ſhould give *Proteſtants* ſome prejudice and juſt ſuſpicion againſt this ſcholaſtic doctrine of a conſubſtantial, co-equal Trinity, that the corrupt CHURCH OF ROME foſters and cheriſhes it as the firſt of her myſteries, and regards it as one of the principal columns that ſupport the fabric of Chriſtianity. The whole *papal* Hierarchy is founded on myſtery. It hath been invariably its policy to blind the underſtanding, and mutter myſticiſm and myſtery on the plaineſt ſubjects, in order to dupe and enſlave the Chriſtian world to its ſpiritual deſpotiſm. The *Pope* of *Rome* very *early* adopted the doctrine of *Athanaſius* †—it was uniſon to his ſoul—quite congenial

* A repreſentation one frequently ſees in the Print-ſhops in London: which occaſioned the following lines:

On a Triangle in a Circle.

Ye idolizing orthodox Divines,
Who circumſcribe the Deity with lines;
Know God is ONE: nor is th' eternal King,
O vile reſemblance! a three-corner'd Thing.

† See *Sozomen Hiſt. Eccleſ.* p. 101, 102, 103. 105. 108. 231. 245. 247. *Theodorit.* p. 103. 194, 195. 208. *Socrates Eccl. Hiſt.* p. 227. 259. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

genial to his political ſyſtem—he careſſed the inventor—contended for the faith of Athanaſius—thundered his anathemas againſt his adverſaries—and gave the pontifical ſanction to his conſubſtantiality, and co-eſſentiality, and hypoſtatical union, as being the only true primitive apoſtolic doctrine. And the church of Rome hath ever ſince been *Athanaſian*—hath canonized the man—and by a little of his help, at *firſt*, hath *ſince* made Chriſtianity leſs like the religion of Jeſus, than it is to the fables of the *Japaneſe*, or the ſacred code of the *Brachmans* of *Indoſtan*.

It is a very affecting and melancholy truth, that *Mohammediſm* was built on the ruins of the Chriſtian religion *. At a time when almoſt the whole Chriſtian world had embraced the *Athanaſian* hereſy of three co-equal Gods, and were clamouring Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, contending for eternal generation, eternal filiation, neceſſary emanation, mutual circumplexion—in this age of Chriſtian IDOLATRY *Mohammed* aroſe, and, as the *fundamental* article

* See this repreſented in a very affecting manner by *Sale* in his preliminary diſcourſe to the Koran, *Vol.* i. p. 43, 44, 45. *Edit.* 8vo. 1764. And *Mod. Univ. Hiſt. Vol.* i. p. 36.

article of his new institution, taught the UNITY of the Supreme Being *. He instigated the *Moslems* to madness against the Christians for corrupting this *primary* article of religion, and enjoined all his followers to harass and destroy the Christians for their impiety and blasphemy in associating colleagues and co-equal sharers † with the Deity in his peerless majesty and perfections.

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* The following is *Mohammed*'s address: "O ye who have received the scriptures! exceed not the just bounds in your religion, neither say of God *any other* than the truth. Verily Christ Jesus the son of Mary *is* the apostle of God, and his word, which he conveyed into Mary, and a spirit proceeding from him. Believe, therefore, in God, and his Apostles, and say not, There are THREE GODS; forbear *this*; it will be better for you. God is but one God." *Sale's Koran, Vol.* i. p. 126. *Edit.* 8vo.

† He styled himself the prophet of the ONE God, *who had no partners. Ockley's History of the Saracens, Vol.* ii. p. 38. GOD is great: There is no GOD, but GOD: He has no companion: He is the only supreme Governor: He only ought to be praised. *Modern Universal History*, in *Life of Mohammed, Vol.* i. p. 214. Before the beginning of the action, *Khâled* and *Serjabil* offered up their prayers in the following terms: "O GOD, help us, we beseech thee, against these wretches [the *Christians*] who pray with *idolatrous* expressions, and take to themselves *another* God besides thee. Help us, O God, who acknowledge thy UNITY, and affirm that there is *no other* God, but thou *alone*, for the sake of thy prophet *Mohammed*, against these *idolaters*. *Modern Universal History, Vol.* i. p. 289.

fections. The *Athanasian* idol was the cause of these sanguinary edicts. Christians had miserably adulterated their religion in one of the most capital and essential articles—*Mohammed* proclaimed that he was delegated from heaven to restore the lost unity; and since other methods which Providence had employed, had, through the vices and corruptions of men, proved ineffectual, that he was raised up to propagate and establish this great doctrine in the world, by dint of arms and military conquest. It was *Athanasianism*, the tritheistic doctrine and worship of Christians, that facilitated the progress of *Mohammedism*, and prepared the minds of Christians for any religious delusion. The origin of the *Papal* Hierarchy and *Mohammedan* imposture was nearly coincident. At that time the state of the Christian world was in the best manner accommodated to exercise the talents and establish the political system of any bold spiritual Adventurer. For when men have consented to sacrifice common sense at the shrine of superstition and mysticism, they are disposed for the reception of any pious enormity. From the *seven* once flourishing *churches* of Asia the *golden candlestick had* long been *removed*, the glorious *lustre* of Christian truth had long been extinct, and the sanctuary was deluged with a torrent of *tritheism* and *monkery*—The *Mohammedans* van-

quiſhed and poſſeſſed all theſe cities and towns, whoſe corruptions of truth and immoralities of life cried to heaven for vengeance againſt them —and theſe conquerors ſoon eſtabliſhed the ſacred authority of the fables and dreams of the *Koran*, where the ſacred authority of the fables and dreams of *Athanaſius* had univerſally predominated.

It is alſo melancholy to reflect, how much the doctrine of three co-equal triune Almighties, hath confirmed, and doth confirm, men in their rejection of the Chriſtian religion. They think their infidelity juſtified, and their renunciation of the goſpel, as a real revelation from God, the genuine reſult and effect of a rational enquiry and a free uſe of their underſtanding and judgment, from a fond perſuaſion that it teaches ſuch a doctrine as the Athanaſian Trinity, and that this myſtic tenet is one of the very firſt and moſt fundamental articles of the creed of a Chriſtian. Inſtead of examining Chriſtianity itſelf, whether it really teaches and juſtifies ſuch abſurd and unworthy notions, they immediately take it for granted it does contain and enjoin them, that they are inſeparably connected with it, and conſtitute an eſſential part of this *pretended* revelation; and therefore look upon the whole of it, as the contrivance of deſigning prieſts to enſlave mankind, to ſerve their ambitious

bitious views, to accumulate immenſe riches and poſſeſſions, by working upon the credulity and the ſuperſtition of the vulgar, and value themſelves upon deſpiſing both the religion itſelf, and thoſe who teach it. The moſt formidable weapons, which the Deiſts have ever employed againſt the goſpel, have been furniſhed by Chriſtians themſelves. When perſons, endowed with more *zeal* for ſome ſyſtematic doctrines of weak and fallible men, than *knowledge* of pure and uncorrupted Chriſtianity, have diſcovered, in defending it againſt the objections of its adverſaries, greater concern for tenets, that are an affront to reaſon and common ſenſe, than for the pure morality of the goſpel; and have contended, with the implacable fury of iniquiſitors, for certain opinions, which they call the fundamental articles of the holy ſcriptures, but which, upon a careful ſtudy of the original records, appear to have no foundation in them; no wonder that Deiſts examine no farther; no wonder if they take the whole for a pious fable and fiction, which makes its believers *ſwallow* religious ſentiments at which plain honeſt reaſon teſtifies an inſuperable averſion. Some have been educated, ſays Dr. BENSON, in bigotry and implicit faith. Their parents, or tutors, have mixed and confounded the ſyſtem of a party, or their own private ſentiments, with the pure

gospel of Christ, or perhaps represented these things as the gospel itself. Upon finding out such mistakes, they grow *jealous* and *suspicious* of every thing that is called *Christianity*, and so throw off all together. Open any of the books of the Deists, and you will find that this supposed Christian doctrine of Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity is the inexhaustible subject of their satire and derision, and of their scornful rejection and contempt of the Christian religion. They are perpetually emptying all their little stores of wit and ridicule upon the Christian notion of a Son being equal to his Father, of a Father who is no older than his Son, a third person *proceeding* from both, being equal with both, of one Almighty being making *satisfaction* to another Almighty being, of a person, who is represented as Mediator and Intercessor, mediating and interceding with himself. *Averroes*, an eminent Physician and Philosopher, who lived in the *twelfth* century, when such notions as these were taught and zealously contended for among Christians, had but too much reason to say: *If these be your principles*, O CHRISTIANS, *may my soul be among the Philosophers* *. The famous Dr. TINDAL exposes Christianity,

* Vid. Vossius de Philosoph. Sectis. p. 90, 91. and *Blouni's Censura vivorum celebriorum*, Article, *Averroes*.

Chriſtianity, and thinks himſelf juſtified in rejecting its pretenſions to a divine Revelation, from a ſuppoſition that it derogates from the honour of the ONE moſt high God. He aſſerts that *Equality* and *Mediation* are as inconſiſtent as *Equality* and *Supremacy*. Dr. FOSTER, citing this paſſage, makes this judicious obſervation upon it: "I think it worth while to recite this paſſage, not becauſe it is a juſt objection againſt the Chriſtian *religion itſelf*, which teaches nothing at all of this *myſterious incomprehenſible* Divinity; but that Chriſtians may ſee how much it ſuffers by the *darkneſs* and *confuſion* of *human* ſchemes, which are not only fathered upon it, but ranked among its *fundamental* and moſt *important* doctrines. And, I hope, ſince this is a common cauſe (the honour of Chriſtianity being evidently concerned in it) they will agree to lay aſide *unſcriptural ſubtilties*, and *diſtinctive party phraſes*, and be content to repreſent the Chriſtian doctrine juſt as they find it in the writings of the *New Teſtament*; and then they will have but *little* to fear from the *ſkill* or *malice* of its adverſaries *." It would be endleſs to recite the various paſſages in the writings

* *Foſter*'s anſwer to *Tindal*'s Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, p. 339. 3d Edition.

writings of Lord *Bolingbroke* and *David Hume*, in which the Christian religion is treated with the last dishonour and reproach from the groundless supposition that it teaches and enjoins the belief of the Athanasian tritheism.

We have lately had loud and affecting complaints of the progress of Infidelity and Irreligion. Can we wonder at this alarming state of things, can we be at any loss for the causes of these dire evils, when such a system of faith and such a creed as this of Athanasius, which is an insult upon all common sense and reason, and subverts the very first principle of all Religion, is retained in our solemn religious services, when it is imposed as a part of worship pleasing to Almighty God and *edifying* to Christian people? Can we express astonishment at the progress of Deism and Infidelity, when in this age of enquiry and knowledge, not the least alteration, not the least amendment hath been made, as to our public creeds and liturgical forms of address—when things NOW stand as they did two hundred years ago, in the days of ignorance and superstition —and when a system of religion, avowedly *Athanasian* and *Calvinistical*, framed and fashioned by men educated in Popish darkness, whom it was impossible should emerge at once into perfect day—when such a system as this STILL continues to constitute the established national standard of

Christian

Christian doctrine and worship—and, which is the most worthy our commiseration and sorrow, when mankind know that these established absurdities and errors, *Predestination*, *original sin*, the *Athanasian Trinity*, are disbelieved and despised by great numbers of the Clergy! And when people have any reason to believe that the ministers of religion are capable of prevarication, *privately* reject and abhor sentiments which their sacred office obliges them *publickly* to subscribe and teach, and solemnly read in the church, creeds and systems and forms of address, for the instruction and edification of common Christians, which in their conversation and writings they ridicule and disprove—this opens a door to infidelity and irreligion, and must produce, and does produce, the most fatal influence on the principles and morals of men.

Moreover, this doctrine of three co-equal Almighties will for ever prevent the reception of Christianity among *Jews* and *Mohammedans*. These people *stumble* at the very *door* of our religion. When they hear of Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, they turn away from Christianity with disgust and horror. Talk to a *Jew*, in Dr. *Bennet*'s language, of a Trinity of *Somewhats*, tell him that in the Godhead there are three persons of *equal* glory, power and eternity, and enforce your argument by assuring him,

him, That this is the Catholic faith which unless he believe, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly, and observe with what contempt the honest Hebrew will regard you and your religion. I once asked a Jew, who was an intelligent man, and had read some of our Theological books, the reason why he disbelieved the Christian religion. He replied, Because you Christians worship more Gods by two than we do and our Religion authorizes us to do.

The doctrine of ONE supreme God, the Almighty Lord and governor of all things, was the very first principle * of the Jewish religion. Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is ONE Lord. The *Jews* had no notion that this ONE Lord was an heterogeneous portentous compound of three distinct and separable yet inseparable subsistencies. God Almighty chose this people to be the great guardians and preservers of the doctrine of his *Unity* and *Supremacy*, when this great fundamental truth was almost lost amidst the *polytheism* and idolatry of the nations around them. And every individual of that immense body of people, scattered over the face of the earth, maintains this great first principle of all religion.

* Προϋπεδείξε γαρ Μωσης πρωτον παντων, ὅτι μονος ὁ Θεος εστι. *Eusebii Preparat. Evangel.* p. 371. *Edit. Vigeri. Paris.* 1628.

religion. What confirms them and will for ever confirm them in their disbelief of Christianity, is the Athanasian blasphemy of three coequal Gods. They will never be converted till they be *convinced* that Christians are taught by their religion to worship the same God as they do, and that the *God of the Jews is also the God of the Gentiles.*

The doctrine of the Trinity, while it is retained and contended for by Christians, will prove an unsurmountable obstacle to the conversion of the *Mohammedans.* For the first and fundamental article of the *Koran* is, the belief of ONE supreme God. The *Mohammedans* contend for the Unity of God against *modern* Christians, and *strive even to blood* for the propagation of this great doctrine in the world. They are instigated by the last aversion and odium against the Christians on account of their idolatry and tritheism. Here *Mohammedans* triumph over and despise modern Christians.

We can also naturally hope for no great success in convincing *pagans* and *heathens* of the truth and divinity of our religion, so long as we retain in our creeds, and inculcate in our instructions, the doctrine of three Almighties and three Eternals, all *equal* in majesty, glory, and perfections of nature. We read in *Le Compte*'s history of *China* how the disciples of

Confucius,

Confucius, the famous Chinese Philosopher, derided the notion of a mortal God, and with what contempt they regarded the Christian religion on that account, as a most absurd fiction. *Casaubon*, in his book *Of Credulity and Incredulity*, declares he could prove from many instances out of history, That this doctrine of the *Trinity* prevented more people from embracing the Christian faith than any other thing he knew *. For as Dr. South well observes of this doctrine, If it was not to be *adored* as a *mystery*, it would be exploded as a contradiction †. Hence it is said, that the *Jesuits* and other missionaries leave trinity and transubstantiation to the very *last* mysteries into which they initiate their converts in foreign countries. The Christian religion therefore can never spread with any success among the *Jews*, *Mohammedans*, and *Heathens* ‡, till the Athanasian *polytheism* and idolatry

* P. 118.

† *South's Sermons*, Vol. iii.

‡ It appears to us, says my ingenious and learned friend Dr. Priestley, that all attempts to convert either the Jews or Mahometans to Christianity must be in vain, till they come to understand that the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity is no doctrine of the New Testament: so fundamental with them is the doctrine of the divine Unity, and so fully are they satisfied, that the doctrine of three divine persons is inconsistent with it. See Dr. *Priestley*'s Principles of the Dissenters, p. 24.

idolatry is wiped from our public creeds and private ſentiments, and our fellow creatures are given to underſtand that Chriſtians believe in ONE Supreme being, the maker and governor of all nature, who ſent an ambaſſador from heaven, of the greateſt dignity and preeminence of nature, to give mankind a pure and perfect ſyſtem of religion and ethics, and to engage men to the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs, by the promiſe of the free pardon and remiſſion of their ſins upon repentance, and the aſſurance to all good perſons of a reſurrection from the grave to the poſſeſſion of an endleſs and happy immortality.

Dr. *Blackſtone* hath lately affected to talk of the *crime of nonconformity* and the *ſin of ſchiſm*; in a great and immortal work hath diſcovered a narrow and illiberal diſpoſition to repreſent Diſſenters to the world in an odious and unjuſt light, and hath ſtudied to infix many heavy unmerited imputations upon us, which it is aſtoniſhing that any Gentleman of an ingenuous and enlarged mind could bring himſelf to repeat and propagate. Amidſt theſe calumnies and reproaches of the world, there is one thing that gives conſolation — That the worſhip of the ONE true God is ſolely among Proteſtant Diſſenters. Athanaſius hath long ceaſed to ſway his ſpiritual trident over Proteſtant Diſſenters.

The

The tritheistic impiety hath long been held in the greatest abhorrence and detestation by rational Dissenters. We worship not Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity—jargon, unknown to prophets and apostles, and which there is nothing in the simplicity of the gospel to countenance and support. We pay not religious homage to inferior and derived beings, for the invocation of whom there is no warrant in our Bibles. Though we have no *Archbishoprics*, *Bishoprics*, *Deaneries*, and *golden Prebends*; though we have no great secular emoluments to enrich and aggrandize us and our families; though we are held up to public derision and contempt, as being all of us defiled with the *sin of schism* and the inexpiable crime of national rebellion, insurrection, and tumult, and as a body of people prepared for any enormity—amidst these scenes it consolates us and fills us with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that we are permitted to worship according to the light of our reason and the direction of our consciences, that we have no false and foolish symbol, no public system of faith imposed upon us by civil and ecclesiastical authority, no prescribed forms and unscriptural formularies, no irrational opinions which we are obliged to utter in our liturgical services, that while the national Church, from which we are reproached for separating, is re-

sounding

ſounding with Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, and with the unintelligible unſcriptural gibberiſh of the Athanaſian hereſy, we Proteſtant Diſſenters, calumniated and vilified as we are by the world, in our *plain* meetings and in Chriſtian *plainneſs*, are worſhipping the ONE God and Father of all, the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, admoniſhing one another againſt the idolatry and ſuperſtition of *modern* Chriſtianity, and exhorting one another inflexibly to adhere to the TRUTH as it is in *Jeſus*, and not in human ſymbols, creeds and ſyſtems. Our ſeparation is not founded in veſtments and ſurplices, in liturgies, croſſes, and genuflexions, in Godfathers, Godmothers, and rotatory motions—it is ATHANASIUS who drives us from your altars—It is the QUICUNQUE VULT with its myſtery and mummery, that baniſhes us from your cathedrals—We had rather continue to be *defiled* with the *ſin of ſchiſm* than to have our religious ſervices polluted with tritheiſm and idolatry.

I cannot conclude this Diſſertation without congratulating numbers both among the *Clergy* and *Laity* for their ſpirited attempts to procure a reviſal of our public *Liturgy*, and to clear it of thoſe forms and expreſſions, which give ſuch juſt and general offence to intelligent and ſerious Chriſtians. Many an honeſt blow hath lately

been

been levelled at the idol of St. *Athanasius*. In proportion as reason is cultivated, the scriptures examined, and light and knowledge increase, a disapprobation of the Athanasian symbol and confession hath increased. It redounds to the everlasting honour and good sense of many of our Clergy, that they omit the reading of this obnoxious creed. A late zealot *, who hath undertaken to be the champion of the Methodists, hath reproached the ingenious Dr. ADAMS of *Shrewsbury* for never reading the Athanasian creed in his church. I honour Dr. ADAMS for this. I formerly entertained the highest ideas of this Gentleman's abilities as a rational and judicious advocate for our common religion, and in my *Introduction to the Study and Knowledge of the New Testament* have mentioned his answer to Mr. *Hume*'s essay on miracles with the applause it deserves: but *this* instance of his good sense and spirited regard for genuine Christianity gives me an exalted opinion of the goodness of his heart and the sincerity of his Christian profession.

Dr. BENSON once shewed me a *Common-prayer book* which belonged to the late Dr. *Clarke*, in which the Doctor had altered with a pen all the Athanasian forms of invocation, and directed them

* *Pietas Oxoniensis*.

them to the Supreme Being—had ſtruck out the *Athanaſian* ſymbol—and made ſuch emendations in the whole ſyſtem as appeared to the underſtanding and judgment of this great and good man, to be warranted by the holy ſcriptures. Dr. *Benſon*, I remember, told me, that this *Common-prayer book*, thus amended and corrected, was intended to be laid before *Queen Caroline*, and this excellent perſon entertained an hope, that through the intereſt he had with her Majeſty, who honoured him with her friendſhip, a reform might be effected. But his death, it ſhould ſeem, prevented the execution of this great and glorious project. What is become of this corrected copy of the common ſervice, I know not *.

Not

* Since writing the above I have met with the following anecdote concerning this corrected copy of the Common-prayer. "He [Dr. Clarke] once ſhewed me, that he had been making ſome emendations in his *Common-prayer* book, and the very laſt time, I think, I ever ſaw him (the *March* before he died) and in ſome of our laſt diſcourſe at parting, he aſked me, if he had ſhewed me what he had been doing in his *Common-prayer*. I ſaid I had juſt ſeen it once: he added, That *it ſhould not be loſt*. With what deſign or view he had done it, he never ſaid to me. I ſuppoſe by ſomething I caſt my eye upon, that one deſign was to correct ſome improper expreſſions, the meaning whereof might be obſcure, and the phraſe harſh and uncouth, even

 where

Not many years ago Dr. CLAYTON, the late learned biſhop of *Clogher*, delivered a celebrated ſpeech in the houſe of *Lords* in *Ireland*, which had for its principal object the abolition of the ſyſtem and ſymbol of *Athanaſius* *. This animated addreſs, it is ſaid, gave the *Iriſh* Hierarchy ſuch offence, that had not death happily interpoſed, the good Biſhop would have been quickly introduced into a place where his mitre and rochet would not have followed him. The Chriſtian world is greatly indebted to his Lordſhip for his immortal *Eſſay* on Spirit, and his noble, but hitherto unſucceſsful attempt to extirpate *Athanaſianiſm*.

The authors of the *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions* in a very modeſt manner repreſented the expedience and honour of a review and amendment of our liturgical forms and worſhip, and faithfully exhibited before the public the ſentiments of a great number of our moſt eminent Divines

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where no points of doctrine were concerned. But I hardly ſuppoſed he ever finiſhed the work, being ſo ſoon after taken from us." See *Emlyn's Memoirs of Dr. Samuel Clarke in the 2d Volume of his Works*, p. 494. *Fourth Edit.*

* This ſpirited and ſenſible ſpeech was firſt printed in 1756. It was reprinted and inſerted in a collection of tracts intitled, The *Cordial for low ſpirits*, in three Vols.

Divines who have borne their teſtimony to the neceſſity of ſuch a reviſal.

What opinion the great and good Archbiſhop TILLOTSON had of the Athanaſian creed, is well known. The account given of Athanaſius's creed, ſays this excellent prelate in a letter written from *Lambeth*, ſeems to me no wiſe ſatisfactory: I wiſh we were well rid of it *!

Dr. *Whitby* †, Mr. *Whiſton*, Dr. *Carter* of *Deal*, *Robertſon* late of Ireland, and many other learned and worthy clergymen have immortalized their names in the hiſtory of the church and in the annals of heaven, for the ſpirited proteſt and the noble ſtand they made againſt this corruption of the Chriſtian religion.

The learned and worthy author of an *Appeal to the common ſenſe of Chriſtian people*, hath given a wound to the Athanaſian cauſe which will never be cured.

On my own part, ſays the incomparable author of the *Confeſſional*, to whom the thanks of the whole Chriſtian world are due, I am neither afraid

* See Dr. *Birch*'s life of Archbiſhop Tillotſon: and Dr. *Clarke*'s Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, p. 416. 3d *Edit.*

† See a Tract entitled Dr. *Whitby's laſt thoughts*, firſt printed in the year 1727, and again 1728. This excellent Treatiſe will be an everlaſting monument of the ſincerity and honeſty of this good old man.

afraid nor aſhamed to call for a review of our Trinitarian form, as what, I think, is quite neceſſary for the HONOUR of the church herſelf *. And the following paſſage in this immortal book the CONFESSIONAL, is a diſtinguiſhed one, and muſt fill the minds of intelligent and ſerious Chriſtians, who wiſh well to the advancement and eſtabliſhment of genuine primitive Chriſtianity, with ſacred joy and triumph—" Many of the *wiſer* and more *thinking* part of the *Clergy* have been long *ſick* of the Athanaſian Creed, and have, by degrees, diſuſed it in their churches. And many of the congregation, where it has been ſo diſuſed, if by accident an officiating ſtranger ſhould read it to them in its courſe, have been known to ſignify their ſurprize and diſlike by very manifeſt tokens. Of this I have been an eye-witneſs more than once †."

May divine Providence give a bleſſing to every attempt to reſtore the Supreme worſhip of Almighty God! May Heaven from time to time

* See *Confeſſional*, p. 359. 2d *Edition*.

† See *Confeſſional*, p. 360, and the Note. 2d *Edition*. If the Athanaſian creed, with its damnatory clauſes, ſays Dr. *Furneaux*, were now a candidate for admiſſion into the public formulary, it would doubtleſs be rejected by a very large majority, both of clergy and laity. Dr. FURNEAUX's *Letters to the honourable Mr. Juſtice* BLACKSTONE, *Letter* iv. p. 78. *Note*.

time raiſe up perſons of diſtinguiſhed underſtanding and integrity to enter their proteſt againſt the depravations of our divine Religion! And may every thing that now eclipſes the luſtre of the goſpel of Chriſt and diſgraces and defiles our *Proteſtant* Churches, be removed through the repeated remonſtrances and holy admonitions of wiſe and good men, till at laſt every obſtacle which *now* impedes the reception of the Chriſtian religion among *Jews*, *Mohammedans* and *Infidels* be aboliſhed, and that heavenly Inſtitution, which was originally deſigned of God to form, and will one day form, the univerſal religion of the earth, triumph over all oppoſition, and conſtitute the faith, direct the practice, and ſecure the *private* and *public* happineſs of the whole world!

DISSERTATION II.

ON THE

SOCINIAN SCHEME.

Και γαρ εισι τινες, ω φιλοι, ελεγον, απο του ἡμετερου γενους ὁμολογουντες αυτον Χριστον ειναι, ανθρωπον δε εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον αποφαινομενοι. οἷς ου συντιθεμαι. *Justin Martyr. Dialog. cum Tryph. p.* 142. *Edit. Jebb. Lond.* 1719.

DISSERTATION II.

ON THE

SOCINIAN SCHEME.

IN the celebrated Dialogue between *Justin Martyr* and *Trypho* the *Jew*, occurs the following distinguished passage. "It appears to me, says *Trypho*, that they who maintain that Christ was merely a man, and that he was according to the Divine purpose anointed and constituted the Messiah, advance a sentiment much more probable than what you espouse. For all of us *Jews* expect the Messiah to be a *man*, and that *Elias* will come and anoint him. But when that Person, who is the Messiah, shall appear, it will certainly be found, that he is a *man* born from men *." And a little before, we hear the same

* Και ὁ Τρυφων, Εμοι μεν δοκουσιν, ειπεν, οι λεγοντες ανθρωπον γεγονεναι αυτον, και κατ' εκλογην κεχρισθαι, και Χριστον γεγονεναι, πιθανωτερον ὑμων λεγειν των ταυτα ἁπερ φης λεγοντων. και γαρ παντες ἡμεις τον Χριστον ανθρωπον εξ ανθρωπων προσδοκωμεν γενησεσθαι, και τον Ηλιαν χρισαι αυτον ελθοντα. εαν δε ὁυτος φαινηται ων ὁ Χριστος,

ſame *Jew* making this declaration: "The ſentiment appears to me to be ſtrange and utterly incapable of being demonſtrated; for to maintain, as you do, that the Meſſiah was a *Divine* perſon, and had a pre-exiſtence before all ages, and that afterwards he ſubmitted to aſſume human nature, and was not merely a *man* from an human origin, this ſeems to me not only a *paradoxical* but a *fooliſh* opinion. I am ſenſible, replies *Juſtin Martyr*, that this ſubject appears to be paradoxical, eſpecially to thoſe of your nation, who never diſcovered a deſire either to underſtand or to do the things of God, but rather choſe to adhere to your *Rabbies*, as God himſelf witneſſeth againſt you. However, Trypho, the great truth that Jeſus is the Chriſt of God, is not invalidated, if I ſhould not be able to ſatisfy you that the Son of the univerſal Parent is a *Divine* perſon, and had a pre-exiſtent ſtate, and that he became a *man* by means of the virgin. For it is in every reſpect demonſtrable that he is the Meſſiah of God, whatever his *nature* may have been. Should I not, therefore, be able to ſatisfy you that he pre-exiſted, and that in compliance with the *Divine* will he humbled

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Χριςος, ανθρωπον μεν εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον εκπαντος επιςασθαι δει. *Juſtin Martyr. Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 142. *Ed. Jebb. Lond.* 1719.

humbled himſelf to become a *man*, to aſſume human fleſh, and to ſubject himſelf to our infirmities, it behoveth you to ſay, that I *only* am in an error in this point—this will not juſtify you in denying that Jeſus is the Chriſt, ſhould he appear to have had no other than an *human* origin, and to have been conſtituted the Meſſiah by the election of God. For, my friends, ſaid I, there are ſome of our ſociety who acknowledge him to be the Meſſiah, but maintain that he was a mere man—to whoſe opinion I aſſent not *."

From this honeſt paſſage we learn, in the *firſt* place, that the *Jews* expected that their *Meſſiah* would only be a man, and have no other than an human original. We ſee *Trypho* treat with great ridicule and contempt the doctrine

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* Παραδοξος τις γαρ ποτε και μη δυναμενος ὁλως αποδειχθηναι δοκει μοι ειναι. το γαρ λεγειν σε προυπαρχειν θεον ονται προ αιωνων τουτον τον Χριςον, ειτα και γενηθηναι ανθρωπον ὑπομειναι, και ὁτι ουκ ανθρωπος εξ ανθρωπου, ου μονον παραδοξον δοκει μοι ειναι, αλλα και μωρον. Καγω προς ταυτα εφην, Οιδ' ὁτι παραδοξος ὁ λογος δοκει ειναι, και μαλιςα τοις απο του γενους ὑμων, οἵτινες τα του θεου ουτε νοησαι ουτε ποιησαι ποτε βεβουλησθε, αλλα τα των διδασκαλων ὑμων, ὡς αυτος ὁ θεος βοα. ηδη μεντοι, ὡ Τρυφων, ειπον, ουκ απολλυται το τοιουτον ειναι Χριςον του θεου, εαν αποδειξαι μη δυνωμαι ὁτι και προυπηρχεν ὑιος του ποιητου των ὁλων Θεος ων, και γεγενηται ανθρωπος δια της παρθενου, αλλα εκ παντος αποδεικνυμενου ὁτι ὁυτος εςιν ὁ Χριςος ὁ του Θεου, οςις ὁυτος εςαι. κ. λ. *Juſtin Martyr. Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 140, 141. *Edit. Jebb.*

trine of the *pre-existence* of Jesus, and the transmission of this exalted Spirit into the uterus of a virgin! He calls it strange, passing strange, and stigmatizes this tenet of the Christians with absurdity and folly. "You attempt, says *Trypho* to *Justin Martyr*, in another place, to prove to me a thing utterly incredible and almost impossible, That a *God* submitted to be *born* and to become a *man* *!" He, elsewhere, attempts to ridicule the notion which the Christians held of the incarnation of a pre-existing Messiah, as the height of extravagance and infatuation. "We read, says he, in the *Heathen Mythology*, that *Perseus* was begotten of a virgin called *Danae* by their supreme God *Jupiter* in the form of a golden shower. You *Christians* believe a *fable* similar to *this*—You ought to be ashamed of it—You ought rather to maintain that your Jesus was a *man*, of the same origin as *other* men, and to attempt to prove from the scriptures, that he was constituted of God to be the Messiah on account of his virtuous and perfect character—But venture not to vend these *prodigies*, lest *you* incur the same folly as the *Greeks* in their Theology."

* Απιστον γαρ και αδυνατον σχεδον πραγμα επιχειρεις αποδεικνυναι, ὁτι θεοῦ υπεμεινε γενηθηναι, και ανθρωπος γενεσθαι. *Justin Martyr. ibid.* p. 204.

logy *." The Christians' notion, that the Messiah existed with God before his assumption of human nature, was what *Trypho*'s understanding could not digest. He lavishes all his wit and satire upon it: Compares the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the virgin *Mary*, and the power of the Almighty overshadowing her, to the impregnation of *Danae* by *Jupiter*, and says that the Christians ought to be ashamed of such a weak and wild hypothesis. This exception of the *Jew*, the *Martyr* refutes with great learning and piety.

Another thing we learn from this passage is, that some of the Christians, in these *primitive* times, denied the pre-existence, affirming that our Saviour was no more than a *man*—with whose opinion, says *Justin Martyr*, I cannot agree †. *Other* Christians, on the contrary, in these

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* Εν δε τοις των λεγομενων Ελληνων μυθοις λελεκται ὁτι Περσευς εκ Δανακης παρθενου ουσης, εν χρυσου μορφῃ ρευσαντος επ' αυτην του παρ αυτοις Διος καλουμενου, γεγηνηται. και ὑμεις τα αυτα εκεινοις λεγοντες, αιδεισθαι οφειλετε, και μαλλον ανθρωπον εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον λεγειν τον Ιησουν τουτον. και εαν αποδεικνυτε απο των γραφων ὁτι αυτος εστιν ὁ Χριστος, δια το εννομως και τελεως πολιτευεσθαι αυτον, κατηξιωσθαι του εκλεγηναι εις Χριστον. αλλα μη τερατολογειν τολματε, ὁπως μητε ὁμοιως τοις Ελλησι μωραινειν ελεγχησθε. *Justin Martyr, Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 200, 201. *Edit. Jebb.* 1719.

† Και γαρ εισι τινες, ω φιλοι, ελεγον, απο του ἡμετερου γενους ομολογουντες αυτον Χριστον ειναι, ανθρωπον δε εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον αποφαινομενοι·

these *early* ages went into the *opposite* extreme; and rashly maintain, says *Origen*, that Christ was the Supreme God over all [the same individual being with the Almighty] but we do not think him so, says this Father, for we believe his own words when he assureth us, saying: The *Father*, who sent me, is *greater* than me *. In the very remotest ages of the Church there subsisted a great diversity of opinions concerning the nature and person of Christ. Some, even in the Apostles' times, asserted that *Christ was not come in the flesh* †—that he never was really invested with human nature—but only exhibited the external *shadowy appearance* and *form* of a *man*.

In the third place, this passage stands an everlasting monument of the amiable and truly Christian candour and charity of *Justin Martyr*. He brings no *railing accusation* against those Christians in his days, who believed our Saviour to have been merely a *man*—he pronounces no anathemas

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αποφαινομενοι· οις ου συντιθεμαι. *Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 142. *Edit.* 1719.

* Εγω δε τινας, ως εν πληθει πιστευοντων και δεχομενων διαφωνιαν, δια την προπετειαν υποτιθεσθαι, τον Σωτηρα ειναι τον επι πασι Θεον· αλλ' ουτι γε ημεις τοιουτον, οι πειθομενοι αυτω λεγοντι, Ο πατηρ, ο πεμψας με, μειζων μου εστι. *Origen contra Celsum. Lib.* viii. p. 387. *Cantab.* 1677.

† Second Epistle of John, *ver.* 7.

anathemas upon their creed—he only ſays, he himſelf could not concur with them in their ſentiments in this particular. He declares, that the *denial* of a pre-exiſtence did not invalidate, or in the leaſt weaken the evidences of Chriſtianity—that Jeſus had abundantly evinced himſelf to be the Meſſiah, whatever his nature and origin might be, whether human or divine—and that however this diſquiſition were determined, Chriſtianity itſelf could not be affected by it, but would remain in full poſſeſſion of its native excellence and divine authority. One cannot but remark, with affecting concern, the ſtriking contraſt between that candour and moderation here expreſſed, by this good man, towards thoſe who denied the pre-exiſtence of Chriſt, and the temper and conduct of many haughty orthodox bigots, whoſe frantic violences and intemperate zeal againſt this ſentiment, and thoſe who adopted it, have, through a ſeries of many centuries, defiled the pages of Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, and diſhonoured the annals of humanity.

In the time of *Irenæus*, there were Chriſtians, who are frequently mentioned and confuted in his celebrated *Book againſt the Hereſies*, who denied the pre-exiſtence of our Lord, and contended that he was the ſon of *Joſeph*. They argued thus: If Chriſt was *born*, he had no being

being before he was born. * In anſwer to theſe, *Irenæus* aſſerts, " That the Word exiſted along with the ſupreme Being at the beginning: that all things were created by him: that he ever ſuperintended the human race: and that in the laſt ages, according to the time fore-ordained by the Almighty, this Divine perſon united himſelf to human nature, and became a man: that he deſcended from the Father—became incarnate: humbling himſelf even to death, and then accompliſhing the oeconomy of our ſalvation †." From the ſame Father we learn, that the perſons who aſſerted that Chriſt was a mere man, and generated, in a natural manner, by his father *Joſeph*, were the *Ebionites* ‡. But with what propriety, replies *Irenæus*, can our Lord be ſtyled greater than *Solomon*, or *Jonas*, or

* Dicentium, ſi ergo natus eſt, non erat anti Chriſtus. *Irenæus*, p. 245. *Edit. Grabe. Oxon.* 1702.

† Oſtenſo manifeſtè, quod in principio Verbum exiſtens apud Deum, per quem omnia facta ſunt, qui et ſemper aderat generi humano, hunc in noviſſimis temporibus ſecundum præfinitum tempus à Patre, unitum ſuo plaſmati, poſſibilem hominem factum——Verbum Dei exiſtens, a Patre deſcendens, et incarnatus, et uſque ad mortem deſcendens, et diſpenſationem conſummans ſalutis noſtræ. *Irenæus, Grabe.* 245.

‡ Nudi tantum hominem cum dicunt ex Joſeph generatum. P. 248. Οι Εβιωναιοι εξ Ιωσηφ αυτον γεγενησθαι φασκουσι. *Irenæus*, p. 253. *Oxon.*

or even *David*, if he had the ſame *common* original with theſe, and were merely an ordinary deſcendent from them. Or with what propriety could our Lord pronounce PETER *bleſſed* for making that profeſſion; Thou art Chriſt the ſon of the living God! * In another place of this learned and uſeful work, one of the moſt valuable remains of Chriſtian antiquity, this Father argues againſt thoſe who aſſerted, That the *beginning* of Chriſt's exiſtence was the *time* of his advent into our world, that only from the time of *Tiberius Cæſar* had the Deity interpoſed for the happineſs of mankind, and who *denied* that the Logos had *always* been the governor and guardian of the human race. †

In the *third* century *Paul* of *Samoſata* diſtinguiſhed himſelf, in maintaining that our Saviour had no exiſtence before he was born of the virgin *Mary*. The council of *Antioch*, convened A. D. 269, by which he was depoſed and excommunicated, in their ſynodical epiſtle ſay,

* Quomodo autem plus quam Salomon, aut plus quam Jona habebat et Dominus erat David, qui ejuſdem cum ipſis fuit ſubſtantiæ. *Irenæus*, p. 358. *Grabe.*

† Si autem Chriſtus tunc inchoavit eſſe, quando et ſecundum hominem adventum ſuum egit, et a temporibus Tiberii Cæſaris commemoratus eſt Pater providere hominibus, et non ſemper Verbum ejus unà cum plaſmate fuiſſe oſtendebatur. *Irenæus, Edit. Oxon.* p. 300.

That this heretic affirmed our Lord's original to be *human* *, and that the ſon of God never *deſcended* from heaven †. Contrary to the doctrine of the church, ſays *Euſebius*, this divine formed a very mean and abject idea of Chriſt, as being nothing more than an ordinary man ‡. In the vindication and ſupport of his hypotheſis, he maintained, That the eſſence of the ſon of God was conſubſtantial with the eſſence of the Father §.

In the ſubſequent century, *Marcellus*, biſhop of *Ancyra*, in a controverſial piece he publiſhed againſt one *Aſterius*, being tranſported by the ſpirit of oppoſition to his adverſary, in the heat of his zeal, happened to aſſert, That our Saviour was no more than a *man*. This was a part of his book too criminal for the zealots of thoſe times to overlook. He was cited before a ſynod of Biſhops, who then ſat at Jeruſalem. They accuſed him of reviving the hereſy of *Paul* of *Samoſata*. They *commanded* him publickly to *change*

* Λεγει Ιησουν Χριςον κατωθεν. *Euſebii Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* 7. p. 362. *Cantab.* 1720.

† Τον μεν γαρ υιον του Θεου ου βουλεται συνομολογειν εξ ουρανου κατεληλυθεναι. *Euſebii Eccleſ. Hiſt.* p. 362.

‡ Την επισκοπην Παυλος ὁ εκ Σαμοσατων παραλαμβανει. τουτου δε ταπεινα και χαμαιπετη περι του Χριςου παρα την Εκκλησιαςικην διδασκαλιαν φρονησαντος, ὡς κοινου την φυσιν ανθρωπου γενομενου. *Euſebius Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* 7. p. 357. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

§ See the *Biſhop of Clogher*'s vindication of the Old Teſtament againſt *Bolingbroke*. *Page* 447. *Edit. Lond.* 1759.

change his ſentiments. The poor man was covered with confuſion, and promiſed them he would burn his book—His ſcheme was afterwards re-examined by a number of Eccleſiaſtics at *Conſtantinople*, and upon his refuſing to deſtroy his bad book, as he had once promiſed them he would, they depoſed him, and ſent *Baſil* to be his ſucceſſor *.—By a ſynod, however, which was ſome time after convoked, he was inveſted with his former dignity, upon his proteſting, That his book had been miſunderſtood, and that he had been *falſely* charged with adopting the opinions of *Paul* of *Samoſata* †. Againſt this book of *Marcellus*, *Euſebius* wrote an elaborate treatiſe ‡, which hath been happily

 transmitted

* Ψιλον γαρ ανθρωπον ὡς ὁ Σαμοσατευς ετολμησεν ειπειν τον Χριστον. ταυτα γνοντες οἱ τοτε εν Ιεροσολυμοις συνελθοντες ἐκελευον αυτον μεταθεσθαι της δοξης· ὁ δε καταισχυνθεις, επηγγελλετο κατακαυσειν το βιβλιον, ὡς δε σπουδη διελυθη ὁ των επισκοπων συλλογος, του βασιλεως εις την Κωνσταντινουπολιν καλουντος αυτους, τοτε δη των περι Ευσεβιον εν τη Κωνσταντινου πολει παροντων, αυθις τα κατα Μαρκελλον ανεζητειτο. ὡς δε ὁ Μαρκελλος ουχ ἡρειτο κατακαυσαι καθ ὑπεσχετο την ακαιρον συγγραφην, οἱ παροντες τον μεν καθειλον Βασιλειον δε αντ' αυτου εις την Αγκυραν επεμψαν. *Socratis Hist. Eccl.* p. 72, 73. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

† See *Socrates*, p. 73. 105. and *Sozomen*, p. 91. *Edit. Cantab.*

‡ Τουτο μεν το συγγραμμα Ευσεβιος εν τρισι βιβλιαις ανετρεψεν, εξελεγξας την κακοδοξιαν αυτον. *Socrates Hist. Eccl.* p. 73. This treatiſe of *Euſebius* againſt *Marcellus*, is publiſhed at the end of his *Evangelica Demonſtratio. Edit. Vigeri, Paris*, 1628.

transmitted to our times, and will amply recompence the learned reader's careful perusal.

Photinus, the disciple of *Marcellus*, inherited from his master the same religious system. He asserted, that there was one supreme Being, who had created all things by his own word, but he denied the eternal generation and pre-existence of the son, and maintained that Christ had no being before he was born of his mother. Say the good Bishops when sitting in council on this heresy; We execrate and anathematize those who falsely assert the Logos to be a pure simple essence, having its subsistence in another—some of them styling it the *Word manifested*, others the *internal Word*, and maintaining that Christ the son of God, the mediator and image of God, had *not* a being before the ages, but that he only was constituted the Messiah, and the son of God, when he assumed our flesh from the virgin, four hundred years ago. For they assert, that our Saviour's Kingdom had a beginning, and will have an end after the general judgment and the consummation of all things. Such are the tenets of those who are the followers of *Marcellus* and *Photinus* of *Ancyra*. They, like the *Jews*, reject the pre-existence and deity of Christ, and the eternal duration of his kingdom *.

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* See *Socratis Eccles. Hist.* p. 98. 100, 101. *Edit. Cantab.*

In these wretched times, also, of theological disputation and uncharitableness, one *Anastasius* happened to throw out this sentence in one of his sermons: Let no one presume to call *Mary* the mother of God. For Mary was a mortal, and it is impossible that God should be born of a mortal.—This was no sooner heard, but the whole church was in an uproar *. *Nestorius* seconded the preacher, and supported his assertion. Such a contest, such a tumult was instantly excited, that, for the peace of the church, it was deemed necessary, that a general council should be convoked. The fathers met at *Ephesus*. *Nestorius* was summoned before them. And while they were *witnessing a good confession* of their soundness and orthodoxy, this heretic had the audacity publicly to declare before them all: I will never call him God, who was once a babe of two or three months old! And, therefore, I am pure from the blood of you all, and from this time I will never come among you. They affirmed he had spoken blasphemy against the son of God, and deposed him †.

* Και ποτε επ' εκκλησιας ὁ Αναςασιος διδασκων εφη, θεοτοκον την Μαριαν καλειτω μηδεις. Μαρια γαρ ανθρωπος ην. ὑπ' ανθρωπου δε Θεον τεχθηναι, αδυνατον. τοτο ακουσθεν, πολλους κληρικους τε και λαικους εν ταυτῳ παντας εταραξεν. *Socratis Hist. Eccles.* p. 380. *Cantab.* 1720.

† Και δη πολλων θεολογουντων τον Χριςον, εγω, εφη Νεςοριος, τον γενομενον

Crushed by these ecclesiastical censures and anathemas, this scheme at first languished, and seems at last totally to have perished in the Christian Church. But about *two* centuries ago it rose from its ashes, under the auspices and patronage of *Faustus Socinus*. Of generosity and liberality of mind, there is not perhaps, in the whole History of Religion, a more illustrious example than *Socinus*. An *Italian*, born in a country overwhelmed with popish darkness, fanaticism, and mystery, the greatness of his soul, the strength of his genius, and the honest freedom of his enquiries, threw off all that immense load of the national superstition, and the errors of a system which was every where triumphant. His understanding he cultivated with an assiduity which nothing could fatigue, the scriptures he read and examined with a mind divested, as much as the human mind can be divested, of prejudices and prepossessions, and from the profoundest *abyss* of national darkness emerged, some will tell you, to the highest summit of rationality and good sense. Smitten with the love of truth, and acted by a probity and integrity, which hath few examples, he dissolved all the ties of country, consanguinity, and friendship;

γενομενον· διμηνιαιον και τριμηνιαιον, ουκ αν Θεον ονομαζαιμι. και διατουτο καθαρος ειμι απο του αιματος ὑμων. *Socrates*, p. 383. *Cantab.*

ſhip; and in order to enjoy unmoleſted a ſyſtem of religious inſtitution, which he had the ſtrongeſt perſuaſion was built on the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, he left his native ſoil, tore himſelf from the embraces of a prince who loved him, relinquiſhed all the ſplendors and honours of a court, and migrated firſt into *Germany*, afterwards into *Poland*, where he ſupported the inſults, that were offered him on account of his religious principles, with a dignity and elevation of ſoul worthy of a philoſopher and a chriſtian. Whether his hypotheſis concerning the perſon of Chriſt be true or falſe, the honeſty with which he conducted his reſearches, and the greatneſs of mind he diſplayed in voluntarily expatriating himſelf, rather than incur the temptation and guilt of worldly compliances, will for ever immortalize his name and his virtue. And though upon a careful and impartial examination of the Divine records, I ſee reaſon to differ from him in that article which is peculiarly ſtyled *Socinianiſm*, yet permit me, reader, freely to declare, that the moſt rational and inſtructive criticiſms and annotations which were ever publiſhed upon the ſcriptures, were executed by *Socinus*, *Crellius*, *Wolzogenius*, *Slichtingius*, *Pzercovius*, *Brennius*. I have had occaſion to conſult and collate many commentators and critics upon the ſacred writings, and I will venture to aſſert,

That there is hardly a good criticiſm in all our *modern* Expoſitors, Mr. *Locke*, Dr. *Clarke*, Dr. *Benſon*, Dr. *Taylor*, Meſſieurs *Pearce* and *Hallet*, Dr. *Sykes*, but what is to be found in that *Collection* publiſhed under the name of the *Unitarian Brethren*, and commonly called the *Fratres Poloni*. I once heard a Gentleman of great erudition declare, That Dr. *Benſon* plundered this great Treaſure of a vaſt number of ingenious remarks and judicious obſervations, without acknowledging the ſources of his intelligence. If this be true, which I hope is not, it was very diſingenuous and illiberal.

In *England*, in the *laſt* century, a number of *Socinians* aroſe, and publiſhed a few books, ill-written and ill-tranſlated. They appear to have formed themſelves into a ſociety—but, like *Marcellus*, they were only juſt *ſhown* * to the world, and then diſappeared.

Mr. *Biddle*, againſt whom Dr. *Owen* wrote, and who was for his hereſy baniſhed by the *Long Parliament* into the iſle of *Scilly*, was an avowed *Socinian*. He poſſeſſed very conſiderable learning, and a ſingular underſtanding. A *Catechiſm* he publiſhed, and which is printed at *London*, 1654, diſcovers an enlargement of mind, a liberality of ſentiment,

* Oſtendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Eſſe ſinent. *Virgil. Æneid. Lib. 6. vers.* 869.

ſentiment, and a ſincerity in freely publiſhing what he apprehended to be truth, which do honour to his memory.

In the *preſent* century the ſcheme of *Socinus* hath met with ſeveral advocates of the firſt eminence for learning and piety. My late worthy and learned friend Dr. LARDNER, whoſe memory I honour, and whoſe diſtinguiſhed abilities and integrity it is not for me to celebrate, for a number of years ſtood almoſt alone, among the Diſſenters, as a ſupporter and defender of the *Socinian* doctrine. In his ſingular erudition and ſincerity, the ſcheme had the weight and authority of a thouſand advocates. He carried on a free and calm debate, in an epiſtolary correſpondence, with his worthy and learned collegue Dr. *Benſon*—but this amicable diſcuſſion produced no alteration in their reſpective ſentiments and ſyſtems. For a number of years, in harmony and love they conducted the paſtoral offices together, and to a ſmall but very reſpectable number of intelligent Chriſtians preached, as one expreſſed it, *Socinianiſm* in the morning, and *Arianiſm* in the afternoon. I mention not this as any thing invidious and diſparaging. For it reflects the greateſt honour upon the memories and characters of theſe great and good men, that ſuch an inviolable harmony and friendſhip ſubſiſted between them notwithſtanding this difference of

opinion,

opinion, and it redounds to the everlasting praise of that worthy society over which they presided, that the supporters and members of it allowed and encouraged, in their ministers, this generous Latitude of sentiment, and this liberal freedom in their religious profession. On the publication of my Explanatory version, or Concise paraphrase of the New Testament, Dr. *Lardner* did me the honour of writing me a long and very learned and excellent *Letter* on *this* subject, which I once intended to have inserted in this Dissertation. But it shall not be lost.

Of late years there have appeared a few publications in support of the Socinian scheme, written, chiefly, by *Dissenters*, among whom, it is said, this theory has recently been gaining some proselytes.

In the year 1766 was published an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, *Another defence of the Unity, wherein St. John's Introduction to his gospel, and his account of the Word's being made flesh*, are considered. The professed design of this little production, is to invalidate and explode the preexistence of Christ: but it is written with great inaccuracy of style and confusion of ideas.

In the subsequent year the public was favoured with an elaborate work in favour of the *Socinian* Hypothesis, entitled, *The true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ, considered, wherein*

wherein the misrepresentations that have been made of it, upon the Arian hypothesis, and upon all Trinitarian and Athanasian principles are exposed. This book, which is written with great candour and with an excellent spirit, is little more than a studied Dissertation on one single passage of scripture, *Before Abraham was, I am*—for other passages of the New Testament, which have been understood to assert, in the strongest manner, the pre-existence of the Son of God, are either totally omitted, or mentioned in a very slight and cursory manner. To this treatise is prefixed a very sensible and judicious preliminary discourse on the rights of private judgment, in which the authority of scripture, as the sole standard of truth, is irrefragably supported, the native liberty and unalienable privilege of thinking and judging for ourselves in matters of religion, is excellently maintained and defended, and the notion of an infallible judge and arbiter of controversy, the *public* invasion of *private* freedom and liberty in forming religious sentiments, and the supposed utility and necessity of an human *established* orthodoxy, to be a public national test of truth and error, are admirably confuted and exposed.

The *Letter* written in the year 1730, and published 1759, and now well known to have been

been Dr. *Lardner*'s, contains the ſtrength of the *Socinian* cauſe.

Theſe ſeveral performances I have read with care—with a mind, I can truly ſay, open to conviction, and unbiaſſed, as much as poſſible, by any former religious hypotheſis. But they have not convinced me. They have not cauſed me to heſitate. I believe others to be as ſincere in their opinions as I am in my own. I have candour and charity for all who differ from me in theſe ſpeculations. I embrace thoſe, who believe the truth of the Chriſtian religion, but ſee reaſon to diſbelieve the pre-exiſtence of its author, in the arms of my benevolence and love, as my chriſtian brethren. I repeat with pleaſure the candid ſentiments of *Juſtin Martyr*, and with pleaſure adopt them for my own: Chriſtianity is the ſame Divine and heavenly ſcheme, its authority and excellence are not invalidated and deſtroyed, whatever our theories and ſpeculations may be concerning the *nature* and *perſon* of Chriſt. I ſhall be highly indebted to any ingenious and learned perſon, who thinks me in an error, if he will publiſh remarks upon this Diſſertation. I ſhall eſteem it an honour done me. I wiſh my worthy friend Dr. *Lardner* could have ſeen it. But he is removed into Eternity, as I ſhall ſhortly be. It manifeſts a littleneſs, an illiberality of ſoul, unworthy an enquirer into truth,

unworthy

unworthy that benevolence the gospel was given to inspire into the human breast, to look *coldly* one upon another, to *think* and *speak* disrespectfully and contemptibly one of another, on account of a contrariety in our respective systems and disquisitions concerning the *Logos*. The essence of Christianity doth not consist in theorizing and speculating, in framing systems for ourselves and ingeniously disproving those of others: but it consists in a good heart, in a devout life, in benevolent affections, and in a truly virtuous and well-ordered conversation. There are difficulties in most subjects: a *metaphysician* will *find* them in the *plainest*. I own it is most congruous to our natural ideas to suppose a person who was born in our world, lived in it, and died in it, to be only a *man*: but there are many of the plainest passages of scripture, which, I think, can never be accommodated to such an hypothesis. Metaphysicians and speculatists, by philosophical refinement, may shed darkness and obscurity upon the strongest light, and dispute and explain away the clearest and plainest expressions.

It is an excellent canon in interpreting scripture, often inculcated by all rational critics and expositors of the sacred Oracles, That the most obvious sense of the words is the true sense. The poor, originally, had the gospel preached

to

to them, and the vulgar were designed to understand its truths equally with the scholar and philosopher. What ideas, therefore, does that text, *Before Abraham was I am*, convey to a man of plain understanding! Does he not naturally infer from these plain words, That our Saviour had a being *before* Abraham! What notion hath a plain poor man of figurative and ideal existence—of an existence, that was not real, but only posited in the Divine decrees! Or how did the *Jews* understand this assertion of our Lord? From their *conduct* most certainly it appears that they understood him to assert his own existence *before* Abraham—for we find upon this explicit declaration that he had a being *before* their great and illustrious ancestor, that they were exasperated to madness against him, and took up stones instantly to murder him for impiously presuming to say of himself a thing so enthusiastically extravagant. Their sanguinary violence on this occasion is a clear FACT in testimony of their construing his words in the *plain obvious* meaning of them, as being a solemn public asseveration that He had a being *before* the birth of the great father and founder of their nation.

On this and every other subject I honestly and sincerely represent things as they appear to my understanding. I plead not the prescription of antiquity,

antiquity, or the authority of names. Fathers and Councils, Creeds and Formularies, human Systems and Catechisms, are not the rule of my faith. Any *man*, however learned and illustrious, or bodies of men, however dignified with worldly stations and honours, and venerable for their age, erudition and piety, will not justify a blind acquiescence in their judgment *. They are not to direct my own understanding, to invade the unalienable right I have to think and examine freely for myself. The *Fathers* were weak men: the *public judgment* of oecumenical councils, paltry and puerile to the last degree. Synods and Convocations have erred. Great men, and the greatest number of great men are fallible, and the *weakest* things that were ever *said*, and the *wickedest* things that were ever *done*, in the whole history of mankind, were *said* and *done* in general Councils and Ecclesiastical synods.

Thanks to the immortal LOCKE, and to his illustrious second, the ever-memorable *Bishop* of *Winchester*, Religious Liberty is *now* well understood, the rights of *private* judgment accurately defined, gloriously extended, and immoveably

* The authority of Emperors, Kings, and Princes, is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishops and Presbyters, is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine. *Sir Isaac Newton in his Observ. on Daniel*, p. 14.

moveably eſtabliſhed; and *ſcriptural authority* alone, not any *eſtabliſhed human* compilation or ſyſtem of orthodoxy, uncontrovertibly proved to be obligatory on the opinions and conſciences of Chriſtians.

There is no man, for whom I retain ſo great a veneration as Dr. LARDNER. His memory is dear to me. His learning was immenſe, and the diſtinguiſhed features of his mind were ſimplicity and godly ſincerity. If there were any perſon whoſe *ipſe dixit* would have been ſacred with me, and in whoſe opinion I were to have repoſed, without examining for myſelf, that perſon would have been Dr. *Lardner*. I had almoſt ſaid, that I regard other critics as children in compariſon with him. But with all my perſuaſion of his abilities, with all my conſcious knowledge of his integrity, with the full idea, deeply infixed in my breaſt, of his ſingular worth as a ſcholar and a Chriſtian, which worth was, moreover, endeared to me by an intimate friendſhip for many years, I think his celebrated treatiſe on the Logos to be weak, his criticiſms in favour of the *Socinian* ſcheme inaccurate, and the whole book, like Dr. *Taylor*'s Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement, to exhibit a melancholy proof of the fallibility of human talents and abilities, however dignified with erudition or exalted with goodneſs. We muſt, I think, have *new* ſcriptures,

tures, and a *new* Revelation to prove and eſtabliſh *Socinianiſm*; for I am perſuaded it will never be ſatisfactorily demonſtrated from the *preſent* ſacred volume. I think it weak and fooliſh in any man, after free enquiry and impartial examination, to adopt an opinion which he cannot defend. But it is with moſt men, as it was with the Fathers, who undertook to *defend* Chriſtianity before they *underſtood* it.

It need hardly be remarked, that this Diſquiſition is ſolely reſtricted to *Revelation*, and to be determined ſolely by *Revelation*. Men may eaſily frame what they may call *rational* hypotheſes, and *then* accommodate *Revelation* to the ſupport of them. But the New Teſtament was never deſigned to form ſubjects for philoſophical diſquiſition and refinement. By this ſpirit it was corrupted and debaſed in the earlieſt ages. Even in the time of the Apoſtles the doctrine of the *reſurrection of the dead* appeared to certain geniuſes to be irrational and impoſſible. They, therefore, employed their underſtanding to invent and eſtabliſh a more *reaſonable* hypotheſis, and by an ingenious explication they conſtrued it to denote only a *moral* reſtoration, declaring that what the ſcriptures meant by a reſurrection was *already paſt*, and had taken place in that *renovation* of heart and life, which Chriſtianity had *already* effected in the world. The natural ob-

vious meaning, that ſenſe, which a man of plain good underſtanding would affix to the plain expreſſions of ſcripture, is the true ſenſe of ſcripture. For it is the intended diſtinguiſhing excellence of the ſacred books, that they are plain. Whether our Saviour had an exiſtence in heaven with God the Father before his incarnation, I think one might ſafely reſt the deciſion of this queſtion with a *Turk* or an *Indian*, or any other plain honeſt upright perſon in the world, who could read our New Teſtament.

What idea does almoſt every man naturally annex to that expreſſion, which ſo often occurs in ſcripture, of the Son of God's *deſcending from heaven?* Does not he certainly conclude, that this Divine perſon *lived* in that bleſſed place, and *came down* from it on *earth* to inſtruct and ſave us? What idea do we affix to the *very ſame* expreſſion, which is of ſuch frequent occurrence in the Claſſics, of the Gods *deſcending from heaven* * upon our earth, but that, according to the heathen mythology, theſe immortal Powers were happy in *Olympus*, but ſometimes *relinquiſhed*

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* —— Summo delabor Olympo,
Et deus humanâ luſtro ſub imagine terras.
Ovid. Met. Lib. i. *ver.* 212.

Deus aliquis delapſus e coelo coetus hominum adeat, verſetur in terris, cum hominibus colloquatur. *Cicero de Haruſp.* reſp. 28. p. 480. *Edit. Schrevel.*

relinquished it to visit mortals. Such phrases we interpret in their natural obvious sense, when used by *Plato*, *Plutarch*, or any of the writers of antiquity. And should any of the inferior Pagan Deities, when on these embassies to mortals, have used such a plain expression as our Saviour hath employed, that he *was come from God, and was going to God* *, as these are *relative* terms, we should naturally understand him to signify that he actually *descended* from *Jupiter*, and was *returning* to him again.

I will faithfully exhibit a detail of those passages of scripture which appear to me in a strong and striking manner to manifest the pre-existence of our Lord, prefixing or subjoining such remarks and observations, as either the *particular expressions* employed in these passages, or the obvious tendency and tenour of them, seem fully to justify.

It has been the common and prevailing opinion of the Church, from the *first* institution of Christianity to the *present* time, that our blessed Lord was that illustrious instrument and minister whom the Deity employed in creating this world. This notion, which hath almost been universal, hath

* Απο Θεου ΕΞΗΛΘΕ και προς τον Θεον ΥΠΑΓΕΙ. *John* xiii. 3.

hath ſcriptural authority to ſupport it. The inſpired Apoſtles aver it in the moſt explicit terms, and in repreſenting it they employ the ſtrongeſt expreſſions, in order to impreſs the minds of Chriſtians with the *dignity* of Jeſus and the *greatneſs* of his *humiliation*. *God*, ſays St. Paul, *who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt*, or, *by means* of Jeſus Chriſt. *Epheſ.* iii. 9. Which text plainly repreſents the Supreme Being employing our Lord as his *agent* in the work of creation. 1 *Corinth.* viii. 6. And one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things: δι' οὗ, through whoſe inſtrumentality all things were originally created. *Heb.* i. 2. By whom he made the worlds, or, ages. For by *him*, namely Chriſt, ſays the Apoſtle Paul, were all things *created*, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. All things were created δι' αυτου *, through his miniſtry, under the direction of the Almighty. All things

* This is the invariable language of ſcripture. Thus is Chriſt's agency and employment under God always expreſſed. God is never ſaid to do any thing for *Chriſt's ſake*. Our tranſlation, *forgiving one another, even as God* for Chriſt's ſake *hath forgiven you*, is very inaccurate, and conveys a falſe and injurious idea of the Deity. It ought to

things were made by him, ſays the Evangeliſt, and without him was not any thing made that was made. *John* i. 3.—Theſe texts, I humbly apprehend, evince, in as perſpicuous and abſolute terms, as writers can employ, the *exiſtence* of our bleſſed Lord *previous* to the formation of this world, and that he was that illuſtrious *agent* and *miniſter*, whom the Supreme Father elected and impowered to form this planet on which we live, and all the things which it compriſeth. Words, I think, have no meaning, and are not the true ſigns of men's ideas, if theſe plain and clear paſſages do not contain and manifeſt this poſition, That Jeſus Chriſt was the perſon, who by the direction of the Deity, originally formed all things.

But the ſcripture carries our views beyond this *æra* of the creation, and, according to the order of our ideas, plainly repreſents the Son of God as the very *firſt* production of the Deity, the very *firſt* being whom the Father Almighty called into exiſtence. This is the preciſe and determinate meaning of ſome expreſſions in ſcripture, which explicitly convey this very idea, and

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to have been rendered, Forgiving one another, as God has, by Chriſt, ὁ Χριστῷ, graciouſly forgiven you. *Epheſ.* iv. 32.

and in ſound juſt criticiſm, I think, cannot be interpreted to any *other* ſignification. For example: Our Lord is ſtyled the FIRST-BORN * of every creature. The word is very properly tranſlated, *firſt-born*. It ſignifies the *very firſt production*. It obviouſly denotes that the Son of God was the *very firſt being*, whom the power and goodneſs of the Supreme produced into exiſtence. The very ſame exalted idea had St. John of the pre-exiſtent dignity of Chriſt, when he ſtiles him; The *beginning* of the *creation* of God †—an expreſſion, exactly of the ſame import with that employed by St. Paul, the *firſt-born* of every creature; and denoting that the Son of God was the very firſt and primary production of the Deity, generated by him before all other things had an exiſtence. On account of this pre-eminence of nature and pre-exiſtence *before all other* created beings, the Apoſtle declares concerning him: That he is *before* all things ‡, and by him all things conſiſted. Theſe words of the Apoſtle manifeſt, that our Saviour had a *being before* the things to which he himſelf gave

* Πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, *Coloſ.* i. 15. See a number of paſſages, in which this word πρωτοτοκος occurs, produced in a note in my *third* Diſſertation.

† Αρχη της κτισεως του Θεου. *Revel.* iii. 14.

‡ Και αυτος εστι ΠΡΟ παντων. *Coloſ.* i. 17.

gave a being, and that he existed before all things were originally formed and constituted by him. This high and magnificent idea of the Son of God is also intended to be conveyed to the reader by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, where in representing the superiority of Christ to the Angels, he says: That when God introduced his FIRST-BORN * into the world he said, Let all the Angels of God worship him. —These expressions of scripture, I think, naturally lead us, and seem intended by inspired Apostles to lead us, to form the most exalted ideas of the glorious dignity and pre-eminence of our blessed Lord, antecedently to his incarnation, and to affect us, in the most powerful manner, with that *humiliation* and astonishing *benevolence* which this Divine person expressed for us.

Moreover, his *existence* and *dignity previous* to his incarnation are clearly manifested in the following passages. In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with the Supreme Being, and the Logos was a divine person †. Verily,

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* Οταν δε παλιν εισαγαγῃ τον ΠΡΩΤΟΤΟΚΟΝ εις τον κοσμον. *Heb.* i. 6.

† *Christ* was *with* GOD at the creation of the world, a real person distinct from him with whom he was. And he with whom *Christ* then was, is called ὁ Θεος, God in a

Verily, verily I ſay unto thee, ſays our Lord to Nicodemus, we ſpeak that we do know, and teſtify that we have ſeen, and ye receive not our witneſs: If I have told you earthly things, and

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peculiar and abſolute ſenſe, God, ſelf-exiſtent, unoriginated, independent, and ſupreme over all, Κυριος ὁ Θεος ὁ Παντοκρατωρ, *the Lord God Almighty*. Our bleſſed Saviour is indeed ſtyled Θεος *a* God, that is, a *divine perſon*, but whatever dignity is included in this term, he is however here diſtinguiſhed from ὁ Θεος, the ſupreme God, and, thus diſtinguiſhed, muſt of neceſſity be ſubordinate to him. For two co-ordinate, ſelf-exiſtent, abſolutely ſupreme Beings are a contradiction. This diſtinction is ſufficiently evident from the nature of the *Greek* language to all that are ſkilled in it: But if it ſhould be ſuggeſted that, becauſe this is now a dead language, ſuch critical remark is not to be depended on, I anſwer, that both *Origen* and *Euſebius*, who muſt be allowed to underſtand the language in which they wrote, and were men of eminent learning, in the early ages of Chriſtianity, have taken notice of this difference for the ſame purpoſe, as I have mentioned. *See a ſhort and plain Commentary upon near two hundred texts in St. John: printed for Griffiths*, 1754. Says a learned Lady: In quoting the text—*In the beginning*, &c. you ought in all fairneſs to have informed your hearers, that the original term Θεος, *a God*, applied to *the Word*, or Chriſt, has not the ſame high ſignification, as ὁ Θεος, *God* appropriated in the ſame verſe to the Father. Whatever you may inſinuate, or think, I will venture to affirm, that no perſon has a juſt and critical knowledge of the Greek Language, who denies this. And it is of great weight, that both *Origen* and *Euſebius*, who wrote in the Greek Language,

and ye believe not, how ſhall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath aſcended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the ſon of man who was in heaven. Which I have thus paraphraſed in my *Explanatory Verſion* of the New Teſtament. "I can ſolemnly aſſure you that I ſpeak from certain knowledge, and atteſt only facts, for the veracity of which I have had the moſt undoubted evidence—and yet you are not diſpoſed to credit my teſtimony. If I tell you theſe plain and ſimple truths, and you will not credit them—how could you reliſh and embrace more ſublime and myſterious diſcoveries! None of the former prophets was ever admitted into the ſeats of celeſtial joy in order to atteſt to men the reality and happineſs of this ſtate—the ſon of man, who is deſcended on earth, was the only perſon that ever reſided in thoſe bleſſed abodes." *John* iii. 11—14. The ſon of man *who was* in heaven *, is ſo direct, poſitive, and ſolemn an aſ-

ſertion

Language, and were the moſt learned Fathers of the primitive Church (ten times more learned than your great *Athanaſius*) have expreſsly taken notice of this difference, and allowed the force of it. *See an excellent Letter to the Reverend Mr. Randolph rector of Deal, by a Lady, ſuppoſed to be our Britiſh Dacier, the very ingenious and learned tranſlator of Arrian's Epictetus.* It is printed for *Griffiths.*

* *John* iii. 13. Ὁ ων εν τῳ ουρανῳ: the ſon of man who *was* in heaven. So it ought to have been tranſlated, as it

ſertion of the pre-exiſtence of our Saviour, from the mouth of our bleſſed Lord himſelf, that I ſee not what criticiſm can evade it, or how it can be tortured into any acceptation, compatible with a ſcheme which denies that our Lord had any being before he was born of the virgin Mary. The antient *Socinians*, indeed, in order to ſolve this difficulty, framed an hypotheſis, that our Lord, after his *baptiſm*, was caught up into heaven, and there had the whole ſcheme of redemption, which he was to conduct and accompliſh, revealed to him by the Father. But this *journey to paradiſe*, which hath ſo much the air of a *Mohammedan* tale, hath no exiſtence in the ſacred page. It was *ingeniouſly* imagined and invented to reconcile to a favourite theory, thoſe many paſſages which ſpeak of the *deſcent* of our Lord from *heaven* upon earth.—What can this plain declaration of St. John mean, *The ſame was in the beginning with God*, but that this Divine perſon, who was afterwards *manifeſted in the fleſh*, exiſted with the Supreme Being before the foundation of the earth was laid? Theſe aſſertions of our Lord; I ſpeak what I have ſeen with the Father: *John* viii. 38. What he hath ſeen and heard, *viz. with the Father*, that

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it is very properly in *John* ix. 25. Τυφλος ων, αρτι βλεπω: Whereas I *was* blind, now I ſee.

that he teſtifieth: *John* iii. 32. All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you: *John* xv. 15. If ye ſhall ſee the ſon of man aſcend up WHERE HE WAS BEFORE: *John* vi. 62.——Theſe expreſſions, in *juſt* propriety of language, can be interpreted only to refer to that *ſtate* of glory and happineſs which the Son of God enjoyed with the *Father* antecedently to his miſſion into our world and aſſumption of our nature. They are the ſolemn aſſeverations of our Lord, predicated concerning himſelf, claiming attention and regard to his doctrines, from his pre-exiſtent greatneſs and union with the Deity, and the authority of his commiſſion and embaſſy from heaven. That plain declaration of our Saviour to the *Jews*, that before *Abraham* was he had an exiſtence, will, I think, for ever ſtand in full force againſt all the acumen of criticiſm and ſagacity of refinement which may be employed to invalidate and explain away its natural and obvious ſignification. The interpretation, that our Lord had an exiſtence in the Divine decree before Abraham, and that it was before the *times* of this Patriarch *fore-ordained* that he ſhould appear in ſuch an age and ſtate of the world, is extremely forced and futile, and does not diſcriminate our Lord, from thyſelf, O reader, who hadſt from eternity an exiſtence in the divine decree, that

thou

thou ſhouldeſt appear under ſuch a diſpenſation, and in ſuch an age and ſtate of the world. It is plain that our Saviour's audience took theſe words in their natural acceptation, as hath been already remarked; for upon his aſſerting to them that he was in being before their great anceſtor, they were inſtantly tranſported into the laſt exceſſes of fury againſt him as a blaſphemer and impoſtor, and took up ſtones with a deſign to murder him. Theſe *actual* violences of the Jews, prove, I apprehend, better than a thouſand inane and chimerical theories, *how* our Redeemer was underſtood and *intended* to be underſtood. His auditors, we find, always interpreted theſe declarations, which he ſo frequently repeats, in their moſt obvious meaning, by theſe plain ſolemn expreſſions, and underſtanding him to diſavow that his original was only human, and peremptorily to manifeſt by them his intimate union and felicity with the DEITY *before* his appearance among men. The following paſſage clearly evinceth this. I *came down from heaven*, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that *ſent* me. And this is the Father's will who hath *ſent* me, that of all whom he hath given me I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it up at the laſt day. And this is the will of him that *ſent* me, that every one, who ſeeth the ſon and believeth on him, may

have

have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. The *Jews* then *murmured* at him, because he said, I am the bread which CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. And they said: Is not this Jesus the *son of Joseph*, whose *father* and *mother* we know! How is it then that he saith, I *came down from heaven!* From this disgust and indignation of the *Jews*, excited against him for his solemn and reiterated assurances that he *came down* from heaven, it is manifest that they understood him to arrogate to himself an *original* superior to his *earthly* and obscure *parents*, and in the most plain and public manner to assert his pre-existence.

In consistence with this state of pre-existent glory and happiness which our Lord enjoyed with the Father before the world was, his amazing condescension in voluntarily relinquishing this station of consummate dignity and felicity, his astonishing abasement in cloathing himself with our infirmities, and his unparalleled humiliation and benevolence in expatriating himself from all the blessedness of heaven, and going in voluntary exile to our world, to deliver us from darkness, to rescue us from ruin, to save us from the penal effects of sin, to abolish death, to bring life and immortality to light, and to announce and ensure to all sincere penitents and good persons a resurrection from the grave at the

the laſt day, and a ſtate of perfection and happineſs with himſelf through all ETERNITY—in conſiſtence, I ſay, with this pre-exiſtent glory and dignity of our Saviour, his HUMILIATION, in order to effect our recovery and redemption, is by the ſacred authors repreſented in all that ſublimity of language and pathos of expreſſion, which are ſuited to ſeal the moſt deep and indelible impreſſions upon the minds of creatures who are infinitely intereſted in this great tranſaction. Of his *miſſion* from God—of his *deſcent* from heaven—of his *diveſting* himſelf of his *former* honours, and ſhrouding all his *priſtine* glory in the earthly houſe of our tabernacle, the following paſſages are clearly and emphatically declarative — His COMING FORTH FROM GOD, HE HIMSELF thus expreſſeth. "For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe you have loved me, and have believed that I *came out from God. John* xvii. 27. I *came forth from* the Father, and am *come* into the *world. John* xvii. 28. Jeſus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was *come from* God, and *was going* to God. *John* xiii. 3. By this we believe that thou cameſt forth from God: *John* xvi. 30. Now I *go* my way to him that *ſent* me. *John* xvi. 5. God *ſending* his ſon in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh. *Romans* viii. 3. Concerning his ſon Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, who was made of the

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ſeed of David, *according to the fleſh.*" *Rom.* i. 3. —His DESCENT from *heaven* upon our *earth*, and his wonderful *condeſcenſion* and *benevolence* in his *aſſumption* of human nature, are thus repreſented. "Now he that *aſcended*, what is it, but that he alſo *deſcended* firſt into the lower parts of the earth. He that *deſcended* is the ſame alſo that aſcended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. *Epheſ.* iv. 9, 10. A *body* haſt thou prepared me. *Heb.* x. 5. Then ſaid I, Lo! I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God! *Heb.* x. 7. Who, though he was in the form of a God, or a divine perſon, was not eagerly deſirous of appearing on earth in this glorious form, but diveſted himſelf of it, aſſumed the form of a ſlave, and appeared amongſt us cloathed with the common robe of frail mortality: And after this aſſumption of human nature, he gave a ſtill farther proof of his humiliation, by voluntarily ſubmitting to death, and even to the death of crucifixion! *Philip.* ii. 6, 7, 8. For ye know the benignity of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that though he was RICH, yet for your ſakes he became POOR." 2 *Cor.* viii. 9. On the *Socinian* ſcheme, which inſtitutes that the Son of God had *no* being before he was born of the virgin, with what propriety can this be predicated of our Lord? Where and when was our Saviour *rich* in

this world! His whole hiſtory contradicts this aſſertion. On the contrary he was ſo *poor*, that he was obliged to work a miracle to ſatisfy the demands of ſome *Jewiſh* collectors. He lived ſolely upon the beneficence of his friends. He had no place, whereon to lay his head. To interpret this of our Lord being *rich* in miracles, and becoming *poor* in them at his crucifixion, is ſuch a ſtrange metaphor and mode of diction, as I believe was never employed by any writer, and ſuch a jejune and forced criticiſm, as I imagine was never ſtudied to explain any author. But on the hypotheſis that our Lord enjoyed the moſt exalted ſtation before his embaſſy to our world, every thing is conſiſtent and natural. In his pre-exiſtent ſtate he was *rich* in glory, honour, and happineſs: with a greatneſs and benevolence of ſoul, that can never ſufficiently be extolled, he abdicated all this, and became *poor*, that we through his *poverty* might become *rich*. The Apoſtle's *argument* to excite the liberality and beneficence of the *Corinthians*, from this ſtupendous act and inſtance of our Lord's condeſcenſion and benevolence, upon *this* ſcheme only, is cogent, appoſite, and very elegant and perſuaſive.

I will conclude this enumeration of paſſages, which, after the moſt impartial examination of ſcripture, with a mind, I am ſure, open to conviction,

viction, and ſolely intent upon inveſtigating and embracing truth, I am perſuaded, plainly and clearly evince the exiſtence of Chriſt previous to his incarnation, I will cloſe this detail with a diſtinguiſhed paſſage, which I beg the reader ſeriouſly to ponder. In that moſt excellent PRAYER, which our Lord addreſſed to the Almighty a little before his laſt ſufferings, among other requeſts he preferred to the Deity, the following very ſtriking and diſtinguiſhed one occurs. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own ſelf, with the GLORY WHICH I HAD WITH THEE BEFORE THE WORLD WAS! Were there no intimation in the whole New Teſtament of the pre-exiſtence of Chriſt, this ſingle paſſage would irrefragably demonſtrate and eſtabliſh it. Our Saviour, here, in a ſolemn act of devotion, declares to the Almighty, that he had glory with HIM before the world was, and fervently ſupplicates that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to *reinſtate* him in his *former* felicity. The language is plain and clear. Every word hath great moment and emphaſis. Glorify thou me with that glory which I had with thee. The *verb* is in the *paſt* tenſe *, and according to all the rules of language, relates to *paſt* time. The phraſe we tranſlate, *with*

* Δοξη ᾗ ΕΙΧΟΝ προ του τον κοσμον ειναι. *John* xvii. 5.

thee, is very expreſſive and emphatical, and ſignifies *apud te*, in *thy preſence*, *near thy perſon* *. Glorify thou me with that glory which I enjoyed in thy preſence, and near thy perſon, before the world was. It is a plain ſolemn addreſs to the Deity, that ſince he had glorified his name on the earth, and had finiſhed the work he had given him to do, that he would now be pleaſed to *re-admit* him to that ſtate of glory and happineſs which he had poſſeſſed in his preſence *before* the creation of the world. Upon this ſingle text I lay my finger. Here I poſit my ſyſtem. And if *plain* words be deſignedly employed to convey any determinate meaning, if the modes of human ſpeech have any preciſion, I am convinced that this *plain* declaration of our Lord, in an act of devotion, exhibits a great and important truth, which can never be ſubverted or invalidated by any accurate and ſatisfactory criticiſms.

When I have ſuffered my ideas freely to expatiate on this ſubject, I find reaſon to think, that men poſſeſſed of erudition and a philoſophical genius, do wrong in indulging a diſpoſition to

* Παρα σεαυτῳ, παρα σοι. *Says the mother of the Maccabees:* Τα της αρετης αθλα οισομεν, και εσομεθα παρα Θεῳ. See *Joſephus, tom.* 2. p. 509. *Haverc.* Non enim ſolùm ante Adam, ſed et ante omnem conditionem glorificabat Verbum Patrem ſuum. *Irenæus*, p. 315. *Edit. Oxon.*

to theorize and ſpeculate upon it. I wiſh learned and ingenious men would conſider, That Chriſtianity was never deſigned to teach men philoſophy, and to reveal to the world the arcana of nature. The ſacred writers never ſtudy, never frame any hypotheſis to account for the mode and manner of our Lord's tranſmiſſion into human nature. They relate it as a FACT. They weave no ſubtil refinements and curious theories on this ſubject. It was not their province. They declare only that the *Word* was *made fleſh*, and dwelt among us, but the *manner* in which this was effected, it was no part of their deſign to teach men. Had they hazarded a *theory*, it might have afforded food to metaphyſicians and ſpeculatiſts, but would have contributed nothing to the cauſe of practical religion and perſonal holineſs. The ſacred writers give the world a plain unadorned narrative, lay before men a ſeries of FACTS, and leave men either to admit them in their plain acceptation, to theorize and refine upon them, if they think them irrational, or to reject them if they have reaſon to believe they are not properly authenticated. The goſpel does no violence to the freedom and liberty of the human mind: it faithfully exhibits, before the underſtanding and judgment of rational beings, a ſyſtem of duties, doctrines, and diſcoveries, and leaves the iſſue with themſelves.

Moreover, it appears to me that the *Socinian* ſcheme, the notion that our Lord had no exiſtence before he was born of his mother Mary, eclipſes the luſtre of his *humiliation*, or rather, totally annihilates ſuch an idea. The aſtoniſhing *condeſcenſion* of Chriſt, in relinquiſhing a ſtate of great glory and happineſs in heaven, and aſſuming human fleſh, is frequently repreſented by the ſacred writers, in the ſtrongeſt terms, in order to affect and impreſs us, and to move all the ſprings of gratitude and affection in our breaſts. You know, ſays St. Paul, the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who though he was RICH, yet for our ſakes became *poor*, that we through his poverty might become rich. And when he is exhorting the *Philippians* to mutual *condeſcenſion* and *lowlineſs* of mind, he repreſents the *humiliation* and benevolence of the Son of God, in all its ſacred dignity and greatneſs, moſt powerfully to affect them, and inſpire them with the like amiable condeſcenſion and beneficence. Let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain-glory, but in *lowlineſs of mind* let each eſteem others better than themſelves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others. Let the ſame mind be in you which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus: Who being in the *form of a Divine perſon*, was not deſirous to retain this glorious form, but diveſted himſelf

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of it, and took upon him the *form of a ſervant*, and was made in the likeneſs of men: and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf ſtill *farther* by becoming obedient to death—and even to ſuch a death as crucifixion! In numberleſs paſſages our Lord ſpeaks of his *miſſion from* God, and *deſcent from heaven*, in order to inſtruct and ſave men—and the Apoſtles are perpetually extolling that moſt exalted philanthropy and grace which he diſplayed in this amazing condeſcenſion. But upon the anti-pre-exiſtent ſcheme, all this illuſtrious merit and benevolence of Chriſt, in abandoning the manſions of the bleſſed and aſſuming our nature, hath no place. He was no more than an *human* prophet and inſtructor, endowed with very great gifts. I cannot accommodate this to thoſe many repreſentations of ſcripture, which were purpoſely written to celebrate his wonderful humiliation and benevolence, in diſrobing himſelf of his heavenly glory and inveſting himſelf with our infirmities. The principal feature in our Lord's mind, which was BENEVOLENCE, is hereby effaced: by far the moſt illuſtrious and ſhining part of his character is, ſurely, wiped away by this moſt degrading hypotheſis.

Farther, when I have been contemplating this ſubject, it has always appeared to me very ſtrange, That ſuch a magnificent apparatus

ſhould be inſtituted by heaven to uſher into the world one who was nothing more than a *man!* Angels after angels wing their flight to *Bethlehem*, to indicate the birth of a *man! Gabriel*, one of the moſt exalted of the heavenly Spirits, is diſpatched from the throne of God to announce the birth of a *man!* The *Holy Ghoſt* ſhould come upon her, and the power of the Moſt High ſhould overſhadow the virgin, to convey into her uterus nothing but what was *human!* Another celeſtial envoy is delegated to *Joſeph*, to bid him not heſitate in taking *Mary* to wife, for that which was conceived in her, was, indeed, of the Holy Ghoſt, but was nothing more than *man!* A moſt magnificent heavenly choir, conſiſting of a multitude of Angels, chearing the midnight hours with repeating, *Glory to God in the Higheſt! Good will towards men!* deputed to our World, and chanting theſe rapturous ſtrains to celebrate the birth of a *man!* Is it not ſomething incongruous and diſparate, that Heaven ſhould diſplay all this ſplendid ſcenery, and laviſh all this pomp and pageantry to introduce into our World a mere ordinary common man, diſtinguiſhed in no one natural endowment from any other of the ſpecies? But ſuppoſing the Being introduced with all this eclat, to be the ſame who was in *the beginning* with God, and had glory *with the Father* before the world was,

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is not the decoration and magnificence, with which heaven dreſſed the ſtage on which this Divine meſſenger would ſhortly appear, highly pertinent and honourable, and is it not with the greateſt propriety that multitudes of the heavenly hoſt, on this GREAT occaſion, the greateſt that ever occurred in the annals of this world, ſhould conjoin with harmonious voices and accordant hearts, in applauding and ſolemnizing a condeſcenſion and benevolence, illuſtrious and great beyond all example!

Finally, whenever I have in my own mind ſeriouſly revolved and diſcuſſed the merits of that ſcheme, which denies to our Lord all exiſtence before his conception, and impartially collated it with the declarations of ſcripture, it hath always appeared to my reaſon and underſtanding, to be very ſtrange and extravagant to imagine that a *man*, however illuſtrious his talents and ſignal his endowments of God, who only figured, as a moſt excellent teacher of religion and morals, on this little and very inconſiderable planet, for a few years, and was born, lived, and died as mortals do; it hath always appeared, I ſay, ſtrange and extravagant to me to ſuppoſe that a mere MAN ſhould have all *power* in HEAVEN, as well as earth, immediately given him—that a mere *man* ſhould inſtantly have a name given him *above every name*, and

be exalted to an eminence infinitely *ſuperior* to any that obtains even in heaven—that at the name of a mere *man* every knee ſhould be commanded to bow, of things in *heaven* and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every being in the whole ſcope of the univerſe, be ordered to confeſs the worthy and regular exaltation of a *mere man*, above all the Cherubim, Seraphim, Archangels, and the moſt exalted orders of celeſtial Beings! Far be it from us to arraign the Divine allotments, and cenſure his wiſdom, equity, and rectitude in the adminiſtrations of his diſtributive juſtice—but to a reflecting and contemplative mind, it cannot but appear a violation done to that eſtabliſhed gradation and harmonious order, which obtains, as the ſcripture teacheth us, among the various ranks and claſſes of angelic Beings, to ſuppoſe a *man* to be infinitely exalted above the moſt elevated and dignified of them—that a perſon, who had merely a *terreſtrial* origin, ſhould, after his deceaſe, be rapt above the ſpheres, and ſeated above the ſtations, of the higheſt Angels and Archangels—and a *man* be raiſed, at once, far above *all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come!*

DISSERTATION III.

ON THE

PERSON OF CHRIST.

Ο γαρ του Θεου υιος, ὁ πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, ει και νεος ι ενηνθρωπηκεναι εδοξεν, αλλ' ουτι γε δια τουτο νεος εςι. πρεσβυτατον γαρ αυτον των δημιουργηματων ισασιν οι θειοι λογοι. *Origen. contra Celsum, Lib.* 5. p. 257. *Cantab.* 1677.

PREFACE.

THE two ſubſequent Diſſertations, containing free and devout reflections on two very diſtinguiſhed paſſages, which diſcloſe ſome of the nobleſt diſcoveries in the Chriſtian Revelation, claim the reader's candour and indulgence. To aggrandize the character of the Deity, and to exalt the perſon and glory of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, they were purpoſely written. It is hoped they will inſtruct and edify common Chriſtians. The author hath faithfully endeavoured to repreſent the true ideas of St. Paul, to illuſtrate the energy and ſublimity of his expreſſions, and above all to make the ſubject conducive to devotion and practical religion. My Thoughts on theſe two celebrated paſſages of ſcripture

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are here *publickly* exhibited, with the ſame ingenuous freedom, with which they were *privately* indulged; and I perſuade myſelf that thoſe Chriſtians, who diſapprove the *ſpeculative* opinions, will yet be pleaſed with the *devotional* ſpirit of the two following treatiſes. They will, I hope, be a monument of one TRUTH: That thoſe ſubjects in Divine Revelation, which, by a ſtrange perverſion, have miniſtred to the bitterneſs of theological contention and uncharitableneſs, contain, and were *deſigned* to contain, the ſtrongeſt excitations to a life of devotion and holineſs.

E. HARWOOD.

DISSERTATION III.

CONTAINING

FREE AND DEVOUT THOUGHTS

on the following Paſſage in

DIVINE REVELATION.

WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, THE FIRST-BORN OF EVERY CREATURE: FOR BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED THAT ARE IN HEAVEN, AND THAT ARE IN EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THEY BE THRONES, OR DOMINIONS, OR PRINCIPALITIES, OR POWERS: ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM, AND FOR HIM: AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST: AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH; WHO IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD, THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE: FOR IT PLEASED THE FATHER, THAT IN HIM SHOULD ALL FULNESS DWELL. *Coloſ.* i. 15—19.

THE holy apoſtles are continually placing before the reader's ideas, the dignity of Chriſt's perſon, and the greatneſs of his condeſcenſion. They appear to have been deſirous

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to employ the ſublimeſt expreſſions their ideas could ſuggeſt, and to have ſtudied to exhauſt the energy of the Greek language, in deſcribing the wonderful ſcheme of man's redemption, and the greatneſs and dignity of the perſon who undertook to execute it. They knew this to be an object, worthy every Chriſtian's attention and moſt ſerious regards. What could ſeal ſuch ſtrong and ſtriking impreſſion on their reader, as to keep his mind fixed on the great author and finiſher of his faith, and to engage him to contemplate the amazing benevolence and love of the bleſſed ſon of God! He, who ſeriouſly conſiders, what an act of humiliation this was, how chearfully it was undertaken, the illuſtrious dignity of the perſon who undertook it, and the honour and happineſs accruing to the human race from the execution of it, cannot but feel what the Apoſtle Paul meant, when he talks *of the length and breadth, the height and depth of the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge!* There is ſuch a vaſtneſs in this ſubject as overwhelmeth all our ideas, and poſſeſſeth all our thinking powers, with ſacred and devout aſtoniſhment. That the beloved ſon of the great God ſhould leave all the bleſſedneſs of heaven, and condeſcend, not only to live amongſt us, but to die for us, is a conſideration which cannot fail to ſtrike every contemplating mind with amazement!

And

And when we, moreover, reflect that the person, who expressed this condescension and love, was the being by whom GOD made the worlds, his only-begotten son, in whom he was well pleased, the object of the Father's peculiar affection, one, who was admitted * *into* the bosom of the Father, that is, one, to whom the great God communicated his counsels and designs, one, whom the Father honoured with the most distinguished place in his affection, and with the most illustrious station of dignity and honour, if we reflect on such a personage, as this, laying aside that glory he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, † *emptying* himself of it, as the Apostle speaks, and assuming an human body, that by living amongst us, he might enjoy the best opportunity of teaching us by a *personal*

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* Εις τον κολπον. Verbum autem ejus, quemadmodum volebat ipse, et ad utilitatem videntium, claritatem monstrabat Patris, et dispositiones exponebat; quemadmodum et Dominus dixit; *Unigenitus filius*, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit. *Irenæus*, p. 335. *Edit. Grabe.*

† Εκενωσε. *emptied himself: divested himself of this glory.* See *Pearce* on *Philip.* Ch. ii. ver. 7. Κενοω signifies to exhaust, *empty.* Θουριος Ξερξης, κενωσας πασαν ηπειρου πλακα. The warlike *Xerxes*, having *emptied* the whole space of the continent. *Æschyli Persæ.* ver. 720. *Edit.* Pauw. *Hagæ Com.* 1745. Τας μεν ουν νησους ουτω των φυγαδων κενωσας Having thus *emptied* the islands of their exiles. *Dion Cassius*, tom 2. p. 1290. *Edit. Reimar.*

perſonal converſation, and of inſtructing us by a familiar example, this cannot fail greatly to affect every ingenuous mind, and fill it with the ſtrongeſt emotions. Eſpecially, when we conſider, that this great and glorious perſon from heaven, did not merely condeſcend to become incarnate, but ſubmitted to a ſeries of ſuffering and perſecution, and cloſed theſe ſcenes by an exit from this life, attended with every circumſtance of cruelty, ignominy, and horror! He who revolves this ſubject, as it is the duty of every Chriſtian to do, frequently, and with great and affecting ſerioufneſs, will ſee the reaſon why the bleſſed Apoſtles labour for expreſſions in deſcribing this ſcene, why they dwell on this divine theme with ſuch ſacred tranſport, why they expatiate on this great and glorious ſubject with ſuch devout fervor, and repreſent the love and compaſſion of the Father, and the humiliation and obedience of the ſon, in conceptions the moſt elevated, in terms and images the moſt ſublime that the human imagination and heart can dictate. And if the Apoſtles are ſo univerſally exhibiting, before the Chriſtian's view, theſe affecting ſubjects; if they are in every page of their writings holding up a faithful glaſs to their reader, for him to view and contemplate the love of the great God, and this amazing expreſſion of it in the incarnation and death of

his

his ſon; if they are perpetually ſtudying to impreſs the reader with the grandeſt conceptions of the dignity of Chriſt, previous to his aſſumption of our nature—from what elevation to what obſcurity he ſtooped, from what glory, dignity and happineſs, to what diſhonour, indignity, and wretchedneſs he voluntarily exiled himſelf, —if the holy Apoſtles are continually fixing the reader's thoughts upon theſe momentous ſubjects, ſurely it is the duty of Chriſtian miniſters to follow ſo worthy an example in their public miniſtrations; faithfully to repreſent to their hearers their immenſe obligations to the Redeemer, to diſplay this great object before them in the fulleſt view, and to engage them, as the Apoſtles did thoſe to whom *they* preached, by every argument and motive, to love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, to cheriſh the moſt affectionate regards to ſuch a benefactor, to inſpire them with the moſt honourable conceptions of the dignity of his perſon, the perfection of his obedience, and the exalted ſtation to which God Almighty hath advanced him, and will advance us, if we, like Chriſt, are faithful to death. For Chriſt is the Chriſtian's pattern, both with regard to his *obedience* and his *reward*. His life is the great model exhibited before us for our imitation, and his reſurrection and exaltation is the glorious crown held up on high to

the view of all ſucceeding ages, that they may ſee in what manner the great God rewarded Chriſt's conſummate worthineſs, and will alſo reward us. It will therefore be uſeful for us to attend to the characters this exalted perſon ſuſtains, and from time to time ſuffer our thoughts devoutly to dwell on thoſe deſcriptions which ſo often occur in the ſacred writings. And it is obſervable that in no paſſage of ſcripture do we meet with ſo ample and elaborate a repreſentation of the perſonal character and dignity of Jeſus, as in that diſtinguiſhed paſſage prefixed to this Diſſertation. I ſhall conſider the particulars in the order in which the Apoſtle hath arranged them, and give my thoughts a free and liberal ſcope in expatiating on his ideas. The ſubject is of great importance. We all are very nearly intereſted in it. I ſhall not therefore entreat the reader's attention: the momentous ſubject claims and demands it.

SECT. I.

THE Apoſtle begins his deſcription with ſtyling Chriſt *the image of the inviſible God.* WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. It is one of the characters of the Supreme GOD, which is often attributed to him in ſcripture, that he is *inviſible.* The king eternal, immortal, *inviſible. No one hath ſeen God at any time.*

Whom

Whom no eye hath seen nor can see. God is a spirit, pure and unembodied mind and intelligence. *No one hath heard his voice at any time,* says our Lord, *or seen his form.* His active energy fills all space, and pervades the whole system of nature without falling under any of our senses. The scripture attributes, indeed, eyes and hands to the infinite mind, but it is merely to accommodate itself to *our* conceptions. GOD is not circumscribed within any limits, confined within any space, but fills all in all by his immensity—Of this great and *invisible* Being Christ is the *image* or *visible* representative. Christ is never described as *invisible*; how should he, when he assumed an human body and appeared in the world—things, of which the nature of the Father is absolutely incapable, cannot possibly admit. For the supreme God is invisible—cannot fall under the senses and perceptions of frail mortality. To suppose the great GOD to become *visible*, would be to suppose him *mutable*—a thing impossible—for God is *unchangeable*, his nature is incapable of any mutability, or the least shadow of a change—But since God Almighty is by his nature and essence *invisible* and *immutable*, we have in the person of our Lord the lively *visible image* of this *invisible* Being. Here we see the brightness of the *Father's* glory shine with mild beams in the per-

ſon of his *ſon*. In the perſon of Chriſt we have a bright mirrour held up before us, in which we behold the reflection of the Father's glory, and the *expreſs image* of the great majeſty of heaven and earth. *No man*, ſays our Lord, *hath ſeen God at any time*; but then he adds, The only begotten ſon who was in the boſom of the Father, he hath *revealed* him: that is, hath given to men an explicit revelation what God is, and was deſigned to bear upon his perſon the expreſs ſignatures of the *inviſible* ſupreme—An ambaſſador is the *image* or repreſentative of his prince, acts in his name and authority, and ſuſtains the perſon and character of his ſovereign. In like manner our ſaviour ſays of himſelf: I am come in my *Father*'s name: The doctrine I deliver is not *mine*, but *His* that ſent me: To ſit on my right hand or on my left is not *mine* to give; this high honour is the gift of my heavenly Father: God ſo loved the world that he *ſent* his *ſon*—and in the *perſon* of his ſon we have a ſtrong and ſtriking *image* of the *inviſible* God. All men ſhould honour the ſon in like manner as they honour the Father, for he comes to us in his Father's name, acts as his repreſentative, is cloathed with his authority, and the inſtructions he teaches us are in effect the ſame as if the great God himſelf delivered them to us. God teaches us by Chriſt

Chriſt—the words which Chriſt ſpoke were not his, but the Father's who ſent him, and he who rejects theſe admonitions and refuſes to obey them, does not merely ſlight the perſon who delivered them, but he inſults the authority of that great Being who ſent him. *He that heareth not the ſon heareth not the Father who ſent him.* Chriſt on earth ſuſtained the character of the great God. He who ſaw him, in effect ſaw the Father, for he was his repreſentative and meſſenger, or, in the Apoſtle's language, *he was the image of the inviſible God*—Man is ſaid to be formed in the *image* of God, as he is a rational creature, endowed with an immortal principle, and by nature rendered capable of knowing, ſerving, reſembling, and enjoying God. But in how ſublimer a ſenſe muſt our bleſſed Lord be the *image* of God, and merit this diſtinguiſhed appellation, he who was made higher than the angels, who obtained a more excellent name than any in the moſt exalted ſtations of the heavenly ſpirits, and who is ſignalized with the title of the only-begotten and well-beloved ſon of God. Well might the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, when he had been deſcribing the dignity of Chriſt, and his ſuperiority to all the orders and gradations of celeſtial ſpirits, draw this affecting inference: See that you refuſe not him that ſpeaketh, meaning Jeſus, for if they

eſcaped not who refuſed him that ſpake on *earth*, Moſes, much more ſhall not we Chriſtians eſcape if we reject him who ſpeaketh to us from *heaven*. If Chriſt is the *image* of the *invisible* God, a perſon of ſuch illuſtrious eminence and greatneſs, if he hath condeſcended to become our inſtructor, and ſpoken to us in his Father's name, ſupported the high character of his Father, and enforced his doctrine with ſuch a great and venerable authority, then, bleſſed God, how aggravated is the condemnation of wicked Chriſtians, and how dreadful will be their puniſhment who neglect this great ſalvation, ſlight not only the compaſſion of Jeſus but contemn the authority of God, and will not be reclaimed and influenced by all the love and condeſcenſion of a merciful Redeemer, nor impreſſed and awed by the authority of the eternal God. How many conſiderations are there to aggravate ſuch an one's final condemnation and miſery. The greatneſs of the ſalvation itſelf, that was freely offered to him, but which he wilfully rejected: the dignity of the perſon addreſſing himſelf to him, calling him to repentance and offering him pardon and everlaſting life, but he turning a deaf ear to all theſe repeated invitations, repulſing the benevolent hand that holds forth theſe bleſſings to him, and unaffected, uninfluenced by any thing that

God

God can declare and Christ reveal to men. If Jesus is the *visible image* or representative of the *invisible* God, and on earth acted in his Father's name and authority, it behoves us to pay a serious regard to what he hath delivered, and to give a diligent attention to the important concerns he hath revealed. The terms and conditions of pardon and salvation which this great APOSTLE and highpriest of our profession hath clearly proposed and fixed, are awful concernments. He hath delivered these in the name of God. They are enforced upon us by every consideration that can *affect* our *hopes* or *influence* our *fears*. They are enjoined upon us by the solemn sanction of the Supreme God, and by the dignity and grace of the beloved son of God. It is at our *peril* we *reject* them: it is to our everlasting *salvation* we *embrace* them. Hath GOD laid help upon *one* who is mighty to save, doth the *image* of the *invisible* God appear amongst us full of grace and truth, is a person of such eminence, and vested with such an authority, employed in reconciling the world to himself, and sending out apostles and ministers in his name and in his Father's name to proclaim to men the great terms of reconciliation with God, then let Christian people take heed that they accept these conditions of pardon and salvation which this illustrious ambassador and messenger

of God graciously offers to them, and reverence that sacred Volume in which these magnificent offers, discoveries, and hopes are comprized.

SECT. II.

The Apostle next characterizes our Lord as *the first-born of every creature.* Who is the image of the invisible God, THE FIRST-BORN OF EVERY CREATURE. I do not know any passage in all the sacred scripture which gives us such grand and lofty ideas of the nature of Christ as this sentence. God existed from all eternity. The eternity, which is passed is boundless, as well as the eternity which is to come. Our ideas are lost and overwhelmed, when we look back into an eternity that knows no beginning, that hath no limit, from which it flowed! Vast and incomprehensible subject! too vast for our confined powers to grasp, too deep for our imperfect understanding to fathom! How great and august is the idea these words communicate: *From everlasting to everlasting thou art God!* When we have traced back millions, and millions, and millions of ages, still we have an eternity behind! How does such a thought enlarge and absorb the mind, and make us annihilate ourselves in our own ideas!—Now to conceive of the Deity, as we ought to conceive of him, as existing from all eternity, and that

Jesus

Jesus Christ was the *first-born* of all God's *creation*, as the Apostle here styles him, what grand and elevated conceptions doth this give us of the person and dignity of our Redeemer! God existing from eternal ages, to which no bounds, no limits can be assigned, and the son of God the *first production*, or, the *first-born*, of every creature—the *very first being* whom the power of the Father called into existence*—hence stiled

* Πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως. *The first-born of every creature*, or, the very *first* being the Deity formed. This expression, as Mr. *Pearce* in *loc.* very justly observes, is exactly parallel with the character Christ gives of himself in the *Revelation*, ch. iii. v. 14. that he is αρχη της κτισεως, *the beginning of the creation of God*: that is, the *first* being derived from God. See *Pearce*'s notes on this verse. Says the learned and ingenious author of the *Trinitarian controversy reviewed*, The first-born of every creature is justly rendered in our English Translation, and necessarily signifies the *first being* whom God produced, or created. See page 120. 207. Printed for *Millar*, 1760. Πρωτοτοκος is applied to the *eldest*, or, *first-born* child. See LXX. *Gen.* x. 15. xxii. 21. xxv. 13. 25. xxvii. 32. xxxv. 23, &c. Ου μετετρεψε σε πρωτοτοκος αποπνεων, ουδε δευτερος τις σε οικτρον εν θασανοις βλεπων, ου τριτος. κ. λ. Thy *first-born* son, expiring, did not move thee: nor thy *second* son looking piteously at thee in his torments, nor the *third*. *Joseph.* tom. ii. p. 516. *Edit. Havercamp.* Filius quidem Dei OMNI CREATURA ANTIQUIOR est, ita ut in consilio patri suo adfuerit ad condendam creaturam. *Hermæ pastor. Lib.* 3. § 12. p. 163. *Edit. Oxon.* 1685.

Tw

ſtiled by St. *John* in a parallel paſſage to *this* of St. Paul, THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD. *Theſe things ſaith the beginning of the creation of God.* The *firſt-born* of every creature evidently denotes one who was produced into being *before* every other creature. One, who had an exiſtence given him before every other creature—and who was *prior* in *time* to *every other* production of GOD. How doth this aggrandize the perſon of Chriſt, and magnify his nature and character! The Apoſtle *afterwards* proves that Chriſt muſt have exiſted *before* every other creature, *becauſe* by *him every other creature* was called into exiſtence. He muſt neceſſarily have exiſted *before* the creatures he *gave* exiſtence to—Chriſt, therefore, being the *firſt-born* of every creature, or, the *firſt* production, the *firſt being* whom GOD the Father called into exiſtence, and by whom HE afterwards made the world,

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Τον Λογον, ὁ εστι πρωτον γεννημα του Θεου. The Logos, who is the *firſt production* of the Deity. *Juſtin Martyr*. p. 66. *Edit. Paris*, 1636. Τον Λογον, ὁς και πρωτοτοκος τῳ Θεῳ εστι. ibid. p. 75. Αλλα τουτο το τῳ οντι απο του πατρος προελθειν, προ παντων των ποιηματων συνειναι τῳ πατρι και τουτῳ ὁ πατηρ προσομιλει. *Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 187. *Edit. Jebb.* Προ παντων των ποιηματων, τουτο αυτο και γεννημα ὑπο του θεου εγενετο. This being [Chriſt] was produced by the Deity before all the creatures. Ibid. See alſo p. 253. 256. 295. 325. 364. *Ejuſdem editionis.*

world, tends to fill us with the moſt reverential ſentiments of the greatneſs of the ſon of God, and of the glory he enjoyed with his Father probably millions and millions of ages before this world was produced into being!

Will the candid reader here permit me freely to obſerve, that the ſcheme of the *Socinians* appears to me greatly to derogate from the honour of the Son of God. Their fundamental and diſtinguiſhing principle is, That Jeſus Chriſt had no being before his incarnation, no exiſtence before he was born of the virgin Mary. I think they muſt give us new ſcriptures before they can ſupport this opinion. I ſpeak this with ingenuous freedom. Upon this ſcheme, in what ſenſe can Chriſt be the *firſt-born* of every creature, ſince at the time *he* was born of the Virgin Mary, the *creatures* in this world had exiſted about four thouſand years *before* him. Or how is this expreſſion, the *firſt-born of every creature*, compatible with the opinion of ſome others: That there *never* was a *time* in which the Son *was not*. At preſent I do not think there is any thing in the ſcriptures to ſupport theſe ſpeculations—but I bleſs my God I have an heart too ample for the narrowneſs of ſect and ſyſtem, and which cheriſhes the warmeſt benevolence for every honeſt man who differs from me, that wiſhes well to, and ſincerely

loves all good persons of all denominations, let their theological sentiments and metaphysical opinions be what they will. For I know it is an HOLY LIFE, which is the great concern upon all schemes. At least it *ought* to be. It is by our *personal* holiness, or the want of it, that we must all stand or fall. The apostle tells us, would to God all religious controversialists would think more on his words than they do, That there comes a DAY when we must all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ to give an account—an account of what?—of our notions about *consubstantiality* and *coessentiality*, and the *hypostatical union*, and *mutual circumplection*, about our schemes and modes and shibboleth, about original sin, justification, predestination, and other party distinctions?—about none of these things—these things will never be asked us—but to give an account how we have lived, to give an account of the *deeds* every one hath done in this body, according to what he has done; and according to these things only, an holy or unholy life, our everlasting state will be determined. For God's sake, therefore, and for the credit of our religion, let us not lay an undue stress upon these controverted trifles, think others worse Christians because they use a number of hard words which Christ and his Apostles never used, and pretend to explain things that are

are inexplicable; but let us with Chriſtian candour and charity conſider their characters and diſpoſitions, and if theſe be conſcientious and good, it matters little in the ſight of God and good men what their *Creed* is. Let us allow others that liberty of thinking which we aſſume ourſelves, and pity only the fierce zealot and uncharitable bigot, whoſe *heart* and *temper* muſt be *wrong*, if his *ſyſtem* and *principles* be ever ſo *right*. What we are perſuaded is TRUTH, let us inflexibly adhere to, and publickly profeſs, but without cenſuring others, and thinking hardly of their ſalvation who differ from us.

SECT. III.

THE apoſtle having obſerved that Chriſt was the *firſt-born* of *every* creature, or, the very *firſt* being whom the power of the Deity produced, next informs us, That it was through him that the whole univerſe of beings was called into exiſtence. FOR BY HIM WERE ALL THINGS CREATED THAT ARE IN HEAVEN AND THAT ARE IN EARTH, VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THEY BE THRONES OR DOMINIONS, PRINCIPALITIES OR POWERS, ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM. The Deity conducts the government of the world by *ſecond* cauſes. Wind and rain, heat and cold, froſt and ſnow, are his inſtruments in adminiſtring the natural world. The

ſeaſons

ſeaſons are his inſtruments in bringing the fruits of the earth to their deſtined maturity. Kings, governors, magiſtrates, are his *inſtruments* in eſtabliſhing order among his rational creatures, and in regulating and diſpoſing civil and ſocial life. The *ſon* of God was the *inſtrument* in his *Father*'s hand in forming and conſtituting all things. *By whom God made the worlds. Who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt.* He was his agent and miniſter on this great occaſion. He endowed him with power, and inveſted him with energy to *call all things out of nothing* by his authoritative word, to ſpeak, and all nature ſhould ſtand faſt *. The whole mundane ſyſtem was

* There are many diſtinguiſhed paſſages in the writings of the primitive Chriſtians, which repreſent *Jeſus Chriſt* as the *agent* and *miniſter* of the DEITY in creating all things in *heaven* and *earth*. Αυτον τον τεχνιτην και δημιουργον των ὁλων, ᾧ τους ουρανους εκτισεν, ᾧ την θαλασσαν ιδιοις ὁροις ενεκλεισεν—τουτον προς αυτους απεστειλεν. The creator and former of all things, by whom He made the heavens, by whom he circumſcribed the ocean within its juſt limits, &c.—Him did GOD ſend to men. *J. Martyr. Epiſt. ad Diognetum*, p. 498. *Paris*, 1636. Τουτον τον Λογον εσχεν υπουργον των υπο αυτου γεγεννημενων, και δι' αυτου τα παντα πεποιηκεν. This Logos did the Deity employ as his inſtrument in the work of creation, and by him He formed all things. *Theophilus ad Autolycum*, p. 88. *Edit. Paris*, 1636. Ο δε λογος, αυταυ, δι' ου τα παντα πεποιηκε. But his Word, by means of whom he formed all things. Ibid. p. 100. In unum Deum credentes fabricatorem

was Christ's formation. All the various orders of being in the intellectual, animal, and vegetable worlds, were formed and arranged in their regular classes and gradations by him.

But this passage of scripture carries our ideas beyond the *present visible diurnal sphere*, as *Milton* calls it, and opens before us the CELESTIAL WORLD, with all the infinite ranks of spiritual beings advancing in a regular series and progression from the lowest station up to the adorable Divinity—at the same time, that it discloseth to us this amazing scene, these infinite myriads, informing us that they were all originally called into being, and thus harmoniously disposed and constituted

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torem cœli et terræ, et omnium quæ eis sunt, per Christum Jesum, Dei filium. *Irenæus*, p. 206. *Grabe*, *Oxon.* See also p. 212. 218. 241. 326. Non ergo Angeli fecerunt nos, nec nos plasmaverunt, nec Angeli potuerunt facere imaginem Dei, nec alius quis præter Verbum Dei. p. 330. See also p. 331. 354. Hic est qui universum hominem plasmavit, voluntati patris deserviens. He it is, who, ministering to the will of the Father, formed all mankind. p. 423. Quoniam unus Deus Pater super omnes, et unum Verbum Dei, quod per omnes, per quem omnia facta sunt: et quoniam hic mundus proprius ipsius, et per *ipsum* factus est voluntate Patris, et non per Angelos. *Irenæus*, p. 428. *Grabe*, *Oxon.* 1702. Λογος, ὁ και το ζην ν αρχη μετα του πλασαι παρασχων, ως δημιουργος. *Cl. Alex.* p. 6. *Edit. Paris*, 1629. See also p. 75. 81. See also a distinguished passage in *Eusebii Orat. Constant.* p. 678. *Edit. Cantab.*

conſtituted by the beloved Son of the Supreme Father, the *image* of the *inviſible* God. The ſcripture draws up the interpoſing vail, which once intervened between time and eternity, and preſents us with a glorious view of what is mentioned in this paſſage, *thrones and dominions, principalities and powers*, vaſt and large communities of happy ſpirits, infinite ſyſtems and ſocieties of them, formed into collective bodies, conſiſting of unnumbered numbers! And theſe all the formation, all the conſtitution of that very perſon who loved *us* and died for *us!* How affecting this view! How incomprehenſible this ſubject! the whole univerſe, with all the infinite variety of creatures it contains, formed, combined, claſſed, ſuperintended by a moſt great and glorious Vicegerent, ſtyled, the image of the inviſible God, and the *firſt* and moſt glorious production of the whole creation of God. The more we ſtrive to explore and graſp this ſubject, and take its vaſtneſs into the ſcope of our ideas, the more we find our powers inadequate to its incomprehenſibility, and our capacities too confined to entertain juſt and congruous conceptions of the conſummate eminence, character, and elevation of that moſt illuſtrious and dignified perſonage, whom the Deity peculiarly honoured with the title of his ſon, his only-begotten ſon, by whom he formed all things,

who

who now governs all things, and who is appointed of God the future judge of angels and men! How ſhould it enlarge our minds, and dilate the ſphere of our ideas to contemplate Jeſus at the head of univerſal government, as appointed of the Deity, *firſt*, the creator and, *now*, the univerſal Lord of all; all power in heaven and earth being now lodged in his hands, and the whole ſyſtem of being, both in the *terreſtrial* and *celeſtial* worlds, ſubjected to his dominion!

SECT. IV.

THE Apoſtle having preſented, to the reader's ideas, Jeſus Chriſt as the univerſal former and lord of all, adds theſe words: *And all things were created by him* AND FOR HIM. The *firſt* part of this ſentence ſhows his power; the *ſecond*, the end and deſign of it. They were created FOR HIM—in order to celebrate his praiſe, to fill created beings with the ſublimeſt ideas of his power and greatneſs, to inſpire them with ſentiments of dutiful allegiance to ſo exalted a character, whom the *Father* thus honoured, and was pleaſed to employ as his agent and inſtrument in executing this grand deſign, and accompliſhing this moſt magnificent ſcheme. They were created *for him*, in this ſenſe, as this view of things ſhould powerfully induce every tongue to confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is now Lord, to the

glory of God the Father—But the true ſenſe ſeems to be, That all theſe orders and claſſes of rational beings in *heaven* and *earth* were created *for him*, to be diſpoſed of by him, to be governed and ſuperintended by him, in a way moſt perfective of his own glory, and moſt productive of the happineſs of his moral and accountable ſubjects. We ſhould, therefore, rejoice that a perſon ſo kind, merciful, and benevolent, now ſways the ſcepter over us: that Jeſus Chriſt now preſides at the helm of univerſal government, he, who was ſuch a merciful and faithful high prieſt in things pertaining to God, ſuch a generous benefactor and friend to human nature, ſo diſpoſed to pity and commiſerate our faults and follies, and who will deal with us, in judgment, not with rigor and ſeverity, but with lenity and mercy. Were all things created to be diſpoſed of by Chriſt, we have reaſon to acquieſce with tranſport in the Divine allotment, and exult and triumph in the reflection, That the final ſentence is to be pronounced upon us by one who was once inveſted with human nature, and who, conſequently, is diſpoſed to make all favourable allowances for our unavoidable imperfection. Therefore hath the Father committed the judgment-day to Chriſt, ſaith the Evangeliſt, *becauſe* he is the *ſon of man*: that is, becauſe being once cloathed with an

human

human body he knows our infirmities, and is qualified to be an *equal* and *proper* judge of human condition. Reader, consider thyself as *created* for *him*, to celebrate his praise, and do honour to him by a Christian life. Habituate thyself to the reflection that thy everlasting state will very soon be determined by him, and may God of his infinite mercy grant thee the wisdom to prepare for this most aweful and solemn transaction.

SECT. V.

THE next observation the Apostle makes relative to the nature of Christ, is, THAT HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS. Thus the evangelist John represents him as being in the beginning with the supreme God, existing along with him before the commencement of time, and infinitely happy in the presence and enjoyment of God before the foundation of this world was laid. Before Abraham was I am, had an existence. God created *all things* by Jesus Christ, and consequently he must have a being before the creatures he formed, or as the Apostle here expresses it, must BE BEFORE ALL THINGS. As *this* expression is synonimous with another already enlarged upon, the same thoughts naturally recur, which shall here be briefly recapitulated— The Deity employed Jesus Christ as his agent and minister in forming this world, and all that

multiplicity of beings it comprizeth. But his creative power was not confined to this planet. The apoſtle here, by divine inſpiration, informs us, That all the *principalities and powers, all the thrones and dominions*, all the communities and ſyſtems of angelic beings in the regions of immortality, were originally formed, and harmoniouſly arranged by him! He was *prior* to all theſe, *for* he created and diſpoſed them all! With what grand magnificent ideas doth this deſcription ſwell our boſoms and dilate our ideas! That all the *life*, *concord*, and *happineſs* that now obtain among all the various claſſes and ſpecies of being in this ſublunary world, ſhould be infuſed and eſtabliſhed by the power and intelligence of one great Being, and the whole vaſt and complicated ſyſtem of this terraqueous globe, ſhould have been thus wonderfully combined and conſtituted by the divine wiſdom, efficacy, and beneficence of one moſt glorious and illuſtrious agent under God—this is a thought that cannot fail to poſſeſs us with the moſt lofty and enlarged conceptions of the tranſcendent vaſtneſs and benevolence of ſuch a power, and inſpire our minds with the moſt ſublime and elevated ſentiments of the dignity of ſuch a perſonage. But if we extend our ideas beyond the limits of this mundane ſyſtem, and conſider the heavenly regions and worlds as

peopled

peopled with inhabitants by the ſame agent and miniſter acting under the Deity, and all thoſe numberleſs numbers and countleſs myriads of angels and ſpirits, and thoſe *principalities*, *powers*, ſocieties, and claſſes into which the Apoſtle here tells us they are diſtributed, deſcending from the Deity in a regular ſubordination to the loweſt ſtation of happineſs, all theſe as *primarily* called into being, ranged and conſtituted by the authoritative energy and wiſdom of the ſame great and moſt exalted perſon; how does ſuch a vaſt idea fill the ſoul to the utmoſt extent of its capacity, and make us loſe ourſelves in the greatneſs and immenſity of the ſubject! Now, Reader, trace back in thy thoughts the Eternity that is paſſed, and *figure* to thyſelf a period when no being exiſted but the great God, and then *repreſent* to thyſelf the Supreme producing a Being, who is here ſtyled the *firſt-born of every creature*, or, as St. John calls him, the *beginning* of the creation of God, the *firſt* production whom the power of the Deity uſhered into exiſtence, *prior* to every *other* creature—thou haſt then the *very* idea which the apoſtle here intended to convey, and *this* ſublime repreſentation of the dignity of Jeſus, was written to exhibit this very thought to thy imagination and mind. For the Apoſtle's argument is, That Chriſt muſt have had an exiſtence *before* all things,

because *all other* things owe their formation to him, were produced out of a *state of non-existence* by his power and agency, and *originally* received their constitution and establishment from him.

SECT. VI.

THE Apostle adds: AND BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST. Meaning, that the whole system of rational creatures is now under his guardianship, and the subjects of his universal government. By him all things consist: that is, owe their present harmonious order, and happy constitution, to his continued agency and beneficence; they are superintended, actuated, and governed by his unremitting care and all-diffusive energy, and all the various ranks of intelligent beings in heaven and earth, are preserved in their original constitution, harmony, and happiness, by his impartial and universal administration—When the Apostle in this passage declares, *That by him all things consist*, he evidently refers to that universal government with which our Saviour is now invested, when God the Father, for his *obedience unto death*, highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in *heaven* and things on *earth*, and things *under* the earth, subjected the whole universe to his controul, constituted him universal lord and

governor, and gave him *all power* both in *heaven* and *earth*. This unlimited power with which he is now entrusted, I should rather say, with which he is most deservedly rewarded, he now exerciseth for the welfare and best interests of his moral subjects, and in such a manner as is most conducive to the great *end* and *design* of his government, which is HAPPINESS. If Christ is now at the head of such an extensive and magnificent empire, the *result*, we are sure, will be the felicity of his subjects. He, who when on *earth* consulted the advantage and salvation of men with such assiduity and ardor of mind, we may very justly infer, is *now* acted by the same benevolent disposition towards us, wishes our happiness with the same fervor of affection he discovered when *in person* amongst us, and hath *now* the most glorious opportunity given him for promoting and ensuring the happiness of the universe, now the sphere of his beneficence and usefulness is so infinitely enlarged. His government, Reader, comprizeth not merely this *sublunary* world, but the whole system of *celestial* beings, whom he superintends and governs as *one* vast collective *family*, every individual of which rejoices that he is at their head. *By him all things consist*, they are preserved in being, have their comforts and enjoyments perpetuated to them, their situations and connections rendered a blessing to them, and

all *our* felicity resulting from the consideration of our being the children of God, the beneficiaries of his providence, the believers of the gospel, the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and the expectants and heirs of another and happier world, all these consolations and blessings, derived from these considerations, are mercifully suggested and continued to us under the government of Jesus, and all the happiness these delightful reflections impart, is communicated to us both in *life* and *death*. It is matter, therefore, of great consolation, I ought rather to say, it is cause of christian triumph and exultation to think, *That all things consist* by means of such a benevolent governor, that the administration of all things in *heaven* and *earth* is in his hands, that our best interests for time and eternity are secure under his guardianship, that the great and ultimate end of his government is the HAPPINESS of the universe, and that the present holiness and everlasting blessedness of his subjects, is the grand and glorious object he labours to secure, as the governor of the church and the sovereign of the world.

SECT. VII.

THE *next* particular in the character of Christ, which the apostle mentions is; *That* HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH. He presides at the head of the church universal. The *whole* christian

christian church, though crumbled into so *many* separate communities, composes but *one* society and family with Christ at its head. All parties, denominations, and sects, who believe the religion of Jesus to be divine, and worship God through a mediator, are all combined into one harmonious body under the patronage of Jesus, how widely different their religious opinions may be in *lesser* matters. *One* is our master, even Christ, as the Apostle speaks, and we are all members one of another. Every *individual* of us contributes *one* to the formation of Christ's spiritual body, the church; as every individual member of the human frame contributes towards the completion, harmony and perfection of the animal system. This is the Apostle's apt allusion and happy comparison. As *many* members, whose uses and functions are *various*, are all *harmoniously* combined to constitute the beautiful *system* of the *human body*, so the *various* denominations and *separate* societies of Christians, and every distinct *individual* of those societies, are *all* aggregated to compose *one* grand and glorious *community* with Jesus at their head, the governor of the church universal, the great metropolitan and primate of nature!

That Jesus presides over the christian church, and that its conservation and welfare are the

object

object of his ſolicitous regard, the hiſtory of the Chriſtian religion fully evinces. If Chriſtianity had not had a powerful heavenly guardian to ſuperintend it, long ago it would have been ſwallowed up in the darkneſs of *Paganiſm* and the ſuperſtition of *Popery*. How wonderfully from time to time, from age to age, hath it emerged from gloom, as at the ſeveral *Reformations* that have obtained in *Europe*, and ſhowed its heavenly form * to the world, when it had been almoſt overwhelmed under popiſh prieſtcraft, ſlavery and ignorance! In what an aſtoniſhing manner did it extend its triumph to the utmoſt boundaries of the *Roman* empire, notwithſtanding all the oppoſition, bigotry, and perſecution it encountered from *prieſt* and *people*. How ſoon did it prevail over heatheniſm and falſe religion, what *numerous* converts did it gain, and what large ſocieties of Chriſtians were ſoon eſtabliſhed in all the populous *countries*, *cities* and *towns* throughout the whole extent and amplitude of the *Roman* dominions. To what can we aſcribe the amazing rapidity of its career, and the aſtoniſhing progreſs it quickly made in the world, but to that great univerſal GOVERNOR to whom *all power* was given in *heaven* and

* Qualis ubi oppoſitas nitidiſſima Solis imago
Evicit nubes, nullâque obſtante reluxit.
Ovidii Metam. Lib. 14. v. 768.

and *earth*, who in *this* ſignal manner patronized the chriſtian cauſe, and, bleſſed be God, *ſtill* continues to vindicate and defend it. In the long period of above *ſeventeen hundred* years, we find that the Chriſtian church hath ſtood every ſhock of violence and perſecution by which *princes* and *politicians* have meditated to ſubvert it, hath triumphed over all the argument and ſatire that *Deiſm* hath employed to diſcredit and ruin it; that it is eſtabliſhed on a firm and eternal baſis, and that, what our Lord declared hath been moſt abundantly verified, *That the gates of hell*, all the powers of infidelity, *ſhould never prevail againſt it.* If Chriſt is the great and glorious preſident of the Chriſtian church, we may conclude that the pale of it will ſtill be enlarged, and one day be extended far and wide as the utmoſt boundaries of this lower world. There are many *prophecies* which clearly indicate this grand and glorious event, and we may infer it from the nature, excellence, and uſefulneſs of the Chriſtian Revelation, which is ſo infinitely well calculated to form an *univerſal* religion, and we may infer it alſo from the office and character our Lord *now* ſupports, as the ſuperintendant of his church, the patron of its intereſts, and the univerſal lord and regent of both worlds.

SECT. VIII.

THE Apoſtle next obſerves, That Chriſt is THE * BEGINNING, THE FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD. But in what ſenſe are we to underſtand this? With what propriety and truth can Jeſus Chriſt be ſaid to be *the firſt-born from the dead?* for have we not *many* inſtances, in ſcripture, of perſons being raiſed from the grave *before* our Saviour? Have we not an account of *Elijah*'s reſtoring to life the deceaſed child of a diſconſolate widow? Have not alſo the ſacred writers of the Old Teſtament recorded another inſtance of a dead body being reſtored to life which was depoſited in *Eliſha*'s tomb? Did not alſo our Saviour raiſe to life the daughter of Jairus, and the widow of *Nain*'s ſon, touch the bier, as they were carrying him to the grave, and inſtantly reanimate the dead corpſe? The reſurrection of *Lazarus* is alſo another ever memorable inſtance. In what ſenſe then can Chriſt be ſaid to be the *firſt-born from the dead*, when we have ſuch numerous inſtances of perſons being raiſed from the grave many hundred years before his incarnation?—But the Apoſtle means

* Αρχη. But ſeveral copies read Απαρχη: as Chriſt is ſtyled 1 *Cor.* xv. 20. 23. See *Wetſtein* and *Pearce* in loc.

means that Chriſt was the *very firſt* perſon who roſe from the grave to actual immortality. It is the ſame ſentiment, which he elſewhere expreſſeth more at large, in theſe words: Chriſt dieth *no more*: death hath *no more* dominion over him: for in that he died, he died *once for all.* All the *other* inſtances which the ſcripture records of perſons being reſtored to life from the tomb, paid *again* the common debt of nature, were only raiſed to a *temporary life*, and ſoon *again* ſlept the ſleep of death. But Jeſus roſe from the tomb to *immortality*, never *again*, as *all* the *others* did, to taſte the bitter cup of death. He was the *firſt-born from the dead*, who roſe to die no more, and on whom death was never *again* to have dominion for ever.

Chriſt is alſo the *firſt-born from the dead* in *another* ſenſe: as he was the *firſt-fruits* of all the ſleeping dead, the great and glorious *archetype* of the *general* reſurrection, and exhibited, in his own perſon, the *firſt* inſtance of the mode and manner in which all the *whole world* ſhould afterwards be informed with life and awake into being. Chriſt, the *firſt-fruits*, *afterwards* thoſe who are Chriſt's at his coming. Hence it is, that from the reſurrection of Chriſt, the Apoſtle argues the future reſurrection of all believers; *firſt*, ſhows that the reſurrection of Jeſus was a FACT that could never be diſproved, and *afterwards*,

wards, as a neceſſary conſequence, aſſerts, That the very ſame omnipotence which animated Chriſt's dead body, will *alſo* quicken *our* mortal bodies. If *we believe* but this one fact, ſays the Apoſtle, that Jeſus died and roſe again, the inference is obvious, That thoſe who ſleep in Jeſus will God alſo bring with him. This GREAT TRUTH conſtitutes the fundamental article and unrivalled glory of the Chriſtian religion, and it infinitely concerns us as accountable creatures. We ſee how *Chriſt was raiſed by the power of the Father*, and we learn, from this affecting inſtance, in what a glorious manner *we* ſhall one day ſtart into being, and be adorned with a ſpiritual and immortal vehicle. Was the reſurrection of Chriſt the *firſt* birth from the womb of the grave to actual immortality, *we* ſhall alſo, one day, have theſe vile bodies of our humiliation faſhioned like unto his glorious reſurrection-body, and we ſhall be metamorphoſed and transfigured into *his* image.—The phraſe, *firſt-born* from the dead, implies that there will be a great event that will *ſucceed* it, of which *this* is only the figurative type and expreſſive emblem. We may conclude, therefore, and God grant that we may often revolve ſuch a ſerious and affecting thought, that as certainly as Chriſt left the tomb in triumph, ſo alſo ſhall all good Chriſtians aſſuredly at the laſt day quit their

tombs

tombs in glorious triumph, and rise in newness of life. What a scene will that be! How tremendously solemn, how awfully pleasing! This great spectacle, O reader, thou wilt behold, and it solely depends on thy present conduct, whether thou wilt view it with inexpressible transport, or with unspeakable shame and confusion. God grant me then the felicity of beholding many of my hearers the seals of my former Christian ministry, *to be my joy and crown of rejoicing in that day!*

SECT. IX.

THE next particular in this apostolic description of our Saviour's character is, THAT IN ALL THINGS HE MIGHT HAVE THE PREEMINENCE: or, as the *greek* original might have been translated, *so that in every respect he is* FIRST—alluding to the several particulars he had before mentioned concerning him: the *first*-born of the creation—the *first*-born from the dead—referring to these he says, So that in every respect he is *first*.* The *first* being the power of God produced,

* ἵνα γενηται εν πασιν αυτος ΠΡΩΤΕΥΩΝ. The Apostle had before enumerated several particulars in which Christ was *first*. He was ΠΡΟΤΟΤΟΚΟΣ πασης κτισεως—he was ΠΡΟ παντων—he was Η ΚΕΦΑΛΗ της εκκλησιας—he was ΠΡΟΤΟΤΟΚΟΣ εκ των νεκρων—The Apostle concludes with saying,

duced, the *first* being that arose from the grave to absolute immortality. As if the Apostle had said, In whatever view we consider the son of God, his glorious *preeminence* in every respect presents itself to our ideas, and the consummate dignity and eminence of his person and character fills the contemplative mind.

Now think, O Christian, how ineffably exalted this being must be, who is so frequently honoured with the distinguishing appellation of the only-begotten son of the blessed God, who was

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ing, *So that* in every respect γενηται ΠΡΩΤΕΥΩΝ: the *first* in dignity of nature and *preeminence* of character. Πρωτευω signifies *to be first*, to have the *precedence*. Says *Plutarch*, Ην γαρ υιος (ως εφασαν) ανδρος ενδοξου και ΠΡΩΤΕΥΟΝΤΟΣ αρετη των πολιτων. For he was the son (as they said) of an illustrious person, and of one who was the FIRST of all the citizens in virtue. *Plutarch: Vit. Solon*, p. 148. Δηλος ην ευθυς, ει γενοιτο δημοκρατια. ΠΡΩΤΕΥΣΩΝ. If there was a democracy, it was manifest he would immediately be the FIRST and leading man, p. 177.

Ποπλικολας δε και ζων ΕΠΡΩΤΕΥΣΕ δυναμει και δοξη δι' αρετην, Ρωμαιων. *Poplicola*, when living, was the FIRST man among the *Romans* in authority and reputation for virtue. *Plutarch. Vitæ Poplicolæ*, p. 199. *Edit. Gr. Hen. Stephani*, 8vo. Αει τινες εξ αυτων εισιν οι ΠΡΩΤΕΥΟΝΤΕΣ κατα την επαρχιαν, ους Ασιαρχας καλουσιν. Some of them are always the FIRST men in the province, whom they call *Asiarchs*. *Strabo*, p. 649. *Edit. Casaubon. Paris*, 1620. Ινα απολομενου αυτου ΠΡΩΤΕΥΣΗ. That when *Pompey* was destroyed he [*Cæsar*] might be FIRST. *Dion Cassius*, *Tom.* i. p. 311. *Edit. Reimar. Hamburgh*, 1750.

was in the Father's bosom, in whom he was well pleased, whom all the angels of God worshipped, and who received adoration and homage from all the *inferior* orders of celestial spirits. Think, how inconceivably illustrious and dignified that glorious personage must be, who is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person! Think how near and dear to God the only-begotten son of the Father must be, how intimate and endearing an *union* of affection and love subsisted between them, what honour the Supreme God conferred upon the object of his distinguished affection, and what an incomprehensibly glorious elevation HE must possess, who was in the beginning with the great GOD, whom the Deity employed as his agent in forming not only this *terrestrial* system, with all the creatures and things it comprizeth, but all the orders and ranks of *celestial* beings. Christian reader, for a moment pause and give free scope to thine ideas in contemplating the son of God —him, who hath a name given him above every name—him, to whose absolute controul universal nature is subjected, and whose dominion comprehendeth not merely this whole *mundane* system, but the whole immense boundless scope of God's heaven!—him, to whose wisdom, rectitude and humanity the conduct and juris-

diction of the judgment day is committed—him, to whose unlimited authority every *knee* is prostrate, of things in *heaven*, and things on *earth*, and things *under* the earth. Can you cherish, reader, too lofty and exalted ideas of such a glorious Being and character as this! Where, except in the Supreme God and Father of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, can you find such majesty, dignity, and pre-eminence, yet tempered with such humanity, mercy and love! Think what an act of humiliation that must be, for *such an one* to lay aside all this glory and assume an human body. Who being in the form of God, was not * eagerly desirous

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* Ουκ αρπαγμον ηγησατο, *did not esteem it a prize*, a *grand acquisition*. The word αρπαγμος hath been sought for in *Heathen* writers with the greatest anxiety, both by *Arian* and *Athanasian* controversialists, but hath always eluded their diligence. Αρπαγμα is not infrequently found. See *Heliodori Æthiopica*, p. 129. 322. 340. 377. *Edit. Commelin*, 1596. I have *lately* found it also in *Eusebii Eccl. Hist.* p. 391. and 552. *Edit. Reading. Cantab.* 1720. But says the learned *Pearce (in loc.)* I *do not find any instance produced of* αρπαγμος *as ever used by any other author but St.* Paul *in this place*. Some years ago I fortunately met with this very word αρπαγμος in that excellent little treatise of *Plutarch*, Περι παιδων αγωγης. The Philosopher speaking of pederasty, which was so predominant in those corrupt ages, says, Τους μεν Θηβησι και τους Ηλιδι φευκτεον ερωτας, και τον εκ Κρητης καλουμενον ΑΡΠΑΓΜΟΝ. Those amours

desirous of retaining this likeness, but divested himself of it, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he still farther humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, EVEN to such a death as crucifixion! WHEREFORE God hath highly exalted him! The more we expatiate on such a subject, and what can be a properer theme to employ a Christian's devout meditations, the more stupendous doth such a condescension appear! If Christ, in every respect, enjoyed such a distinguished pre-eminence, the more distinguished is his voluntarily divesting himself of it, and going into a most illustrious exile, to promote and effectuate the redemption, liberty, and everlasting happiness of sinful and miserable mortals.

SECT. X.

LASTLY, this distinguished passage of divine Revelation, teacheth us to attribute these high

amours which are prevalent at *Thebes* and *Elis* are to be avoided, and that for which *Crete* is infamous, called the *seizure*, the *prize*, the *acquisition*. *Plutarch*, περι παιδων αγωγης, p. 20. *Edit. Gr.* 8vo. *H. Steph. Edit.* fol. *Xylandri Francof.* 1620. p. 12.

My very learned and ingenious friend Dr. KENNICOT in a late conversation informed me that this word had been *also* found by *another* person, but he could not *then* recollect the *author* in which it occurred, nor the *person*'s name who had discovered it.

titles and honours to the ſon of God, with the neceſſary reſtrictions and limitations, and ever to remember, That IT PLEASED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM SHOULD this FULNESS DWELL. When we dwell on this ſubject, we ſhould never forget the great and glorious Original of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was graciouſly pleaſed that all this fulneſs of authority, and greatneſs, ſhould be lodged in the perſon of his ſon. It pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all this fulneſs dwell. The Father beſtowed it. It was his free and liberal donation *. From the great God all this perfection of nature and plenitude of dominion originally flowed. And to the Deity doth Chriſt continually aſcribe it. I can do nothing of myſelf. My Father is greater than I. My Father who ſent me, he doth the works. My doctrine is not mine, but his that ſent me. I ſeek not my own will, but the will of my heavenly Father. St. Paul, in another place, ſaith, that in *Chriſt dwelt all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*; but in the very ſame language, he prays that *Chriſtians may be filled with all the fulneſs of God*—plainly importing that this fulneſs of the divine ſpirit, which was given to Chriſt

* Εχαρισατο. Philip. ii. 9. *Hath graciouſly conferred upon him.* This advancement of Chriſt is here attributed to God's free gift. *Pearce* on *Philip.* ii. 9.

Chriſt without meaſure, and which is alſo imparted to good Chriſtians, was all derived from the love and goodneſs of the Supreme God. It pleaſed the Father that in Chriſt ſhould all this fulneſs dwell. So that, Reader, you ſee, all, all redounds to the glory of the one Supreme God and Father of all. All, all centers in God. Every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus is now univerſal governor and lord, but it muſt be to the glory of God the Father. To God then let our praiſes aſcend through Chriſt. In religious worſhip let all our ideas terminate in God. Let us not confound the perſon of the Son with the Father. Let not our devotions and prayers fix on any *intermediate* objects, to the diſparagement and ſecluſion of the great *firſt* Object, but let the pious exerciſes of our hearts, the contemplations of our minds, and the devotional fervors of our gratitude, thankſgiving, and praiſe riſe in grateful incenſe, through Jeſus Chriſt, to the throne of the adorable JEHOVAH, who ſo loved this world that he ſent his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.

DISSERTATION IV.

ON THE

RISE, PROGRESS, PERFECTION,

AND END OF

CHRIST's KINGDOM.

Του Χριςου αρχην βασιλειας εσχηκεναι θελουσι, και τελος εξειν αυτην, μετα την συντελειαν και κρισιν.
Socrates Hist. Eccles. p. 100. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720.

DISSERTATION IV.

CONTAINING

FREE AND DEVOUT THOUGHTS

on the following Passage in

OUTLINE

DIVINE REVELATION

KING PROGRESS PERFECTION.

THEN COMETH THE END WHEN HE SHALL HAVE DELIVERED UP THE KINGDOM TO GOD, EVEN THE FATHER; WHEN HE SHALL HAVE PUT DOWN ALL RULE AND ALL AUTHORITY AND POWER. FOR HE MUST REIGN TILL HE HATH PUT ALL ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET. THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH. FOR HE HATH PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET: BUT WHEN HE SAITH ALL THINGS ARE PUT UNDER HIM, IT IS MANIFEST HE IS EXCEPTED WHO DID PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM. AND WHEN ALL THINGS SHALL BE SUBDUED UNTO HIM, THEN SHALL THE SON ALSO HIMSELF BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM THAT PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM, THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

IN this most excellent Chapter the Apostle, in a very awful and solemn manner, represents the second coming of Christ and the return

DISSERTATION IV.

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IN this moſt excellent Chapter the Apoſtle, in a very aweful and ſolemn manner, repreſents the ſecond coming of Chriſt and the reſurrection

rection of the Dead. It is well known the *Heathens* renounced and ridiculed the notion of a resurrection *—and St. Luke observes, that no

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* Αι, Αι, ται μαλαχαι μεν επαν κατα καπον ολωνται,
Η τα χλωρα σελινα, το τ' ευθαλες ουλον ανηθον,
Ὑστερον αυ ζωοντι, και εις ετος αλλο φυοντι·
Αμμες δ' οἱ μεγαλοι και καρτεροι η σοφοι ανδρες,
Ὁπποτε πρωτα θανωμες, ανακοοι ενχθονι κοιλᾳ
Ἐυδομες ευ μαλα μακρον ατερμονα νηγρετον ὑπνον.
Moschi Idyl. 3. *verf.* 100. *Edit. Oxon.* 1748.

Alas, the tender herbs and flow'ry tribes,
Tho' crush'd by winter's unrelenting hand,
Revive and rise when vernal zephyrs call.
But men, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
Bloom, flourish, fade, and fall:—and then succeeds
A long, long silent dark oblivious sleep,
A sleep, which no propitious pow'r dispels,
Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years.

Soles occidere et redire possunt:
Nobis cum occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda. Catullus.

Celsus ridicules the Christian doctrine of a *resurrection*, and calls the *hope* they entertained of *emerging* from the *ground*, the hope of *worms*. He pronounces a Resurrection to be an absurd impossibility, an object neither of the *will* nor *power* of the Deity. Ηλιθιον δ' αυτων και το νομιζειν, επειδαν ὁ θεος, ὡσπερ μαγειρος, επενεγκῃ το πυρ, το μεν αλλο παν εξοπτηθησεσθαι γενος· αυτους δε μονους διαμενειν, ου μονον τους ζωντας, αλλα και τους παλαι ποτε αποθανοντας ανταις σαρξιν εκειναις απο της γης αναδυντας, ατεχνως σκωληκων ἡ ελπις—σαρκα δη, μεστην ων ουδε ειπειν καλον, αιωνιον αποφηναι παραλογως, ουτε βουλησεται ὁ Θεος ουτε δυνησεται. *Origen* contra *Celsum*, *Lib.* 5. p. 240. *Edit. Spencer*, *Cantab.* 1677.

no sooner had the Apostle Paul, in his speech to the *Athenians*, mentioned the word Resurrection, but the assembly broke up in the most tumultuous disorder and confusion, making it the subject of their banter and mockery. *When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.* Some of the *Corinthians* seem either to have disbelieved this doctrine, or to have entertained very erroneous sentiments concerning it—amusing themselves, as weak and fallible men are disposed to do, with many ideal and fanciful reveries concerning it, not satisfied with the *revelation* that their mortal bodies would certainly be reanimated, and the principle of life rekindled, but forming many airy schemes and visionary conjectures, *how* they would be raised up, and with what *kind* of vehicles, whether the *same* or *not* which they had in *this* life, the dead would *then* be invested—The apostle argues the resurrection of Christians from the resurrection of Jesus. Christ the *first-fruits*, *afterwards* those that are Christ's. The dead body of Christ being reanimated by the power of the Deity, after its reposing three days in the sepulchre, was designed, he observed, to be a *symbol* and *pattern* of *our own* restoration to life in a similar manner. He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall *also* quicken *your* mortal bodies. Is the resurrection of Jesus a FACT—if you admit

admit its credibility and certainty, you must advance *another* step, and allow the possibility and certainty of that grand event it was designed to prefigure. If Christ was actually raised from the tomb, then is he become the * *first-fruits* of the future *general* harvest of the sleeping dead.

SECT. I.

THE Apostle having asserted and proved that this grand catastrophè would most certainly take place, that all human kind, who had existed in all ages and nations of the world, would all be informed of new life in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, make their appearance all together, and have judgment passed upon them according to the deeds done in this mortal state—after the decisive sentence is pronounced, and they are all adjudged to a state of happiness or misery; THEN, says the Apostle, COMETH AN END! At this great event time ends, and eternity begins! Here the drama of human life is finished. Here the history of this world concludes. Now time is swallowed up and lost in the abyss of eternity. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death. The *reign* and *empire* of DEATH

* The *first-fruits* were an handful of the *first ripe* corn, which being carried through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple, and offered to God, publickly announced that the *general* harvest would soon be gathered in.

DEATH here terminates—Let us pause and for a moment indulge a few serious reflections. *Then cometh the end!* Aweful thought! And shall I, who must in a few years at longest leave this world, be raised from my grave, awake into new life, and be able to say the first moment I feel myself re-exist, Now time is no more—an endless duration is now before me, an immense boundless ocean without a shore. Am I to behold the light of the sacred morning of the resurrection as certainly as I now see the light of the present day! How solemn and striking are those words, as *commonly* understood, which the angel pronounced: *I looked, and behold an angel stood on the sea-shore, and he lift up his hand to heaven and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time should be no more!* To think that when millions and millions and millions of ages have flowed, still there is an ETERNITY before us! O *Eternity, thou aweful pleasing thought!* Great numbers of persons have been converted by allowing themselves freely to think what ETERNITY is, and what the loss of its happiness must be! Indeed, I think it hardly possible for a frail and dying creature to persist in a course of wickedness, who thinks what it is to forfeit the favor, acceptance, and blessing of God to all ETERNITY! Reader, that *time* which commenced with us when we drew the first breath of

life,

life, will ſoon have a *period*. Every accountable creature, that is now living, will very ſoon be uſhered into a new and unknown ſtate of being, and what ſhould greatly impreſs and affect the living, into a ſtate of being that will never, never have an end! How ſoon this may happen to you and me, the ſupreme Diſpoſer only knows. Life is uncertain, not one moment of it is in our power. Human life, in its longeſt duration, is but a vapor that appears for a ſhort time and then vaniſhes away. ETERNITY will very ſoon open upon us all, in all its unutterable ſolemnities. *Then cometh the end*—Now if our ſtate and condition, through an everlaſting duration, is ſo ſoon to be determined, irreverſibly determined, O what care and caution, what vigilance and circumſpection is requiſite! My all is here ſuſpended, for I am *now* living for eternity! Immortality will be a *bleſſing* or *curſe* to me, according as I now *regard* or *diſregard* the things that belong to my everlaſting peace! Were an angel diſpatched from the manſions of the bleſſed to inform a perſon that at ſuch a *particular* time he ſhould die; would he not ſpend the *intermediate* ſpace in making the beſt preparation, that he might ſecure an happineſs that would be commenſurate with the being of God and the ages of eternity. Alas, how diſpoſed are dying mortals to amuſe themſelves

with

with the fond sanguine hope of longevity, to brood over a delusive visionary prospect, to make sure of a long life, and to soothe themselves with the vain and flattering imagination that they will be some of the very last whom the shaft of death will pierce. After we have traced over in our ideas the *intermediate* stages of life, and indulged ourselves with the romantic notions of a calm decline and of extreme old age, which we make sure of attaining, after we have extended the limits of our own life to this happy length, *then*, and not till *then*, are we apt to say, *cometh the end!* This distant period we shall live to see; such is the wretched fascination of life, such the power of self-flattery and self-imposition, and then we shall fall, like mature fruit, into the cold but hospitable grave. Just as if there were nothing in the world to accelerate this end, and dismiss us from this precarious state, long, long before the remote, happy, advanced period arrive which our partial deluded imagination hath assigned.

It would have the happiest influence on the whole tenor of our lives, did we habituate ourselves to consider this great End here mentioned by the Apostle, and suffer its awefulness to sink into our minds with that weight and moment it deserves. Here all temporal things will have a final period. All the grandeur and magni-

magnificence, the pomp and pageantry of the world will be no more. The ſtates and kingdoms, the republics and empires, the principalities, powers, and dominions of this tranſitory ſyſtem will *now* have a total diſſolution. Nay, the whole globe itſelf, with all the works of men, ſhall be wrapped in fire, the grand cities, the magnificent temples, the ſuperb palaces, the lofty mountains, the cultivated plains, ſhall be incircled in one vaſt conflagration—all theſe things will be diſſolved—the elements will be burnt up—and the whole ponderous maſs of the earth ſhall be reduced to aſhes, and *like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion leave not a wreck behind.* This is the fate that awaits the world. It was *once* deluged and overwhelmed with *water*, it will be *finally* deluged and overwhelmed with *fire*——This end of all things terreſtrial is a ſpectacle we ſhall all behold. For the ſacred ſcripture doth not repreſent the *General judgment* as being to be ſolemnized on *earth.* For this grand tranſaction it aſſigns an ampler theatre. The boundleſs plains and immenſe fields of the air, is the region where mankind will be all congregated, be divided into two companies, and the ſentence pronounced. *They ſhall meet the Lord in the* AIR. Here the tribunal will be erected—and here the pious and holy will look down from their elevation, and ſee the world encom-

encompassed with flames, and all the glory of the sons of men perish for ever. *Then cometh the end.* This is the grand catastrophè of all mundane things. An event, to serious reflections on which we ought to habituate ourselves. An event, for which it behoves us to make daily preparation. *Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved,* says St. Peter, *what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!*

SECT. II.

THE Apostle informs us that *'till* this period the Deity hath subjected ALL THINGS to the dominion of Jesus. HE HATH PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET. But on *what* account was the son of God invested by the Father with the extensive and magnificent kingdom here mentioned?—The incarnation of the son of God was an amazing act of benevolence. The more we suffer our ideas to dwell upon it, the more stupendous it appears. Lo! I come to do thy will, O my God! He chearfully assumed the body that was prepared for him. Prompted by his love for mankind, he relinquished the throne of God, the bosom of his Father, and all the blessedness of heaven. This was an instance of condescension and love the most illustrious and exalted we can possibly conceive. His conduct,

when cloathed with our nature, was truly exemplary. His devotion and resignation to God are very conspicuous parts in his divine character. The performance of the will of God was his meat and drink, his delight and happiness. To the sorrows and sufferings of this mortal state he submitted with a magnanimity and philosophy beyond all example great. How affecting is it to behold such a person conflicting with such sufferings! How affecting to behold the only-begotten Son of the blessed God, by whom he made the worlds, spend wearisome days and nights, have no place whereon to recline his head, live upon the charity of the well-disposed, poor and necessitous, calumniated and despised, enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself, and above all, how affecting is it to contemplate this divine person closing all these scenes of human calamity, defamation and wretchedness by a death attended with all the circumstances of cruelty and ignominy. Thus lived and died the son of God.—Now let us transfer our ideas to a *future* state, and see how the great God regarded this illustrious virtue and this perfect obedience unto death. And inspiration informs us, that in consequence of his incarnation, obedience and death, and his having so worthily accomplished the designs of infinite wisdom and goodness, the Deity exalted

Jesus

Jesus to the highest honours. We see Jesus, says the Apostle, *for* his *sufferings* and *death* crowned with *glory* and *honour.*—*After* his resurrection this is the language of Christ. All power is now given to me in *heaven* and *earth.* I am now invested by my Father with universal dominion. The government of all things *celestial* and *terrestrial* is lodged in my hands, and entrusted to my care. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. The following is a celebrated passage which, in very strong and striking language, represents to us the humiliation of Christ, and the transcendent recompences which God Almighty conferred upon him in reward of it. "Who being in the form of God was not desirous of retaining this likeness to God, but divested himself of it, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: WHEREFORE God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This was the crown

our Saviour had in view, this was the *joy set before him* which inspired him with unconquered zeal through all the scenes of mortal condition, and animated him to *endure the cross*, and *despise* the *shame* of *such* a death. He is now constituted the governor of the world, the head of the church, and the future judge of mankind: in all things he hath the pre-eminence, for it hath pleased the FATHER that in him should all this fulness dwell. Our Saviour's consummate virtue, therefore, and most illustrious worthiness in assuming our nature, publishing and perfecting that last and best dispensation of God to man, and dying for the redemption of the world, were the basis and foundation of that universal KINGDOM with which the blessed God hath crowned his services, were the great and glorious occasion of that elevation and dignity to which the Deity hath advanced him, and his perfect character, and obedience even to *death* in the cause in which he was engaged, were the worthy reasons with God for making him an assessor with him in his throne, placing him at his right hand, immediately putting into his hands the reins of universal empire, and constituting him the lord and governor of all things in heaven and earth. And had GOD convoked a general assembly of all the beings in heaven and earth, and appointed them to choose an universal

REGENT,

REGENT, they would all have been unanimous in the choice of Jesus—for where, except in the adorable Supreme, could they have found such dignity of nature united with such perfection of character!

SECT. III.

THE Apostle having asserted that Jesus Christ is now constituted by the Father universal GOVERNOR, by the spirit of prophecy declares to us; that HE WILL REIGN 'TILL HE SHALL HAVE PUT DOWN ALL RULE AND ALL AUTHORITY AND POWER, AND THAT ALL THINGS SHALL BECOME SUBJECT TO HIM. From which we learn that a glorious period will arrive, though probably many ages distant, when the whole world will embrace the Christian religion, and compose one church universal. This distinguished passage of sacred scripture spreads before us the prospect of this auspicious æra. All false religion, all *Mohammedan* imposture, all *Popish* superstition, all *Jewish* delusion, all *Pagan* idolatry, all *anti-christian* systems and *human* creeds will be abolished, and be dispelled like the shades of darkness before the great *Sun of righteousness*, when it shall please the Providence of God that he shall arise in all his heavenly glory upon a benighted world—We see this PREDICTION of the Apostle, in this passage, *in part* now accomplished.

Immenſely large and populous countries are Chriſtian. No inconſiderable part of the globe hath received and eſtabliſhed the Chriſtian Religion, as the popular worſhip. The *Mohammedans* all to a man acknowledge the divine authority of Jeſus, believe him to be a true and mighty prophet ſent from God. I mention this that the reader may ſee, that whenever it pleaſes God that ſuch a *Reformation* ſhould happen, how eaſy the tranſition will be into the *Chriſtian* faith with people who *already* entertain ſuch high and exalted notions of the character of Chriſt. There is infinite pleaſure in giving one's thoughts free liberty to range over this moſt delightful ſubject. Surely it muſt be a vaſt ſatisfaction to every Chriſtian who knows his religion to be divine, and wiſhes well to the happineſs of the whole world, to think that all mankind will one day be bleſſed with the ſame light and privileges with which he is bleſſed, and probably make a better uſe of them than he hath done. Tranſporting thought, grateful to every benevolent mind, that the goſpel will have *this* free courſe, and be *thus* glorified in the converſion and ſalvation of ſuch prodigiouſly large kingdoms and populous countries, ſwarming with infinite myriads and millions of inhabitants, and in time make a ſucceſsful and triumphant progreſs to the utmoſt limits and

boundaries

boundaries of the creation—This is what the Apostle *hints*, but leaves his reader to supply, when he says: WE SEE NOT AS YET ALL THINGS PUT UNDER HIM: as much as to say, but we may conclude from *this* that they will—that the whole world will be subject to his spiritual dominion, for we see Jesus, on account of his suffering and death, *now* crowned with glory and honour, so that from the dignity and authority with which he is now invested, we may infer that he is capable of effecting this grand REVOLUTION in the religious and moral state of the *whole* world. Providence, Reader, apparently seems, for some time past, to have been *gradually* opening a way to facilitate and accomplish this great design, by that amazing pitch of skill and perfection to which *navigation* is now advanced, by which an intercourse is maintained with the most *remote* and extensive countries in the world. And the Christian religion would make infinitely greater progress in these countries, were they not the most profane and abandoned of men who commonly go thither, and by their impiety and immorality insuperably disgust all, with whom they converse, against their religion. For the *Heathens* are not so profane and profligate as the Christians; they have infinitely more reverence for the name of God than we Christians; so that the famous *Leibnitz* had too much reason

to ſay: Inſtead of our ſending miſſionaries over to the *Indians* to teach them *religion*, *they* ought rather to ſend miſſionaries over to *Europe* to teach us *morality* *. It is a lamentable and deplorable conſideration, to think how much the progreſs of the Chriſtian religion is checked and impeded in foreign countries by the lives and morals of thoſe who profeſs it. And would to God there were not OTHER THINGS, beſides *open* practical wickedneſs, in our public *creeds* and *ſyſtems* to hinder this great and good work, and make theſe people *ſtumble* at the very *door* of Chriſtianity, and turn away from our religion with averſion and contempt †. But there will come

* Certe talis noſtrarum rerum mihi videtur eſſe conditio, gliſcentibus in immenſum corruptelis, ut propemodum neceſſarium videatur miſſionarios *Sinenſium* ad nos mitti, qui Theologiæ naturalis uſum praxinque nos doceant, quemadmodum nos illis mittimus qui Theologiam doceant revelatam. *Præfatio ad noviſſima Sinica.*

† 'Tis yet a farther grief to think what a fatal ſtop is hereby put to the progreſs of the goſpel, whoſe rejection by *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and *Pagans* is undeniably occaſioned by the *common doctrine* of the incarnation of GOD. One may read in *Le Compte*'s hiſtory of *China* how the *Heathens* derided the *Chriſtian*'s doctrine of a MORTAL GOD, and upon that account eſteemed Chriſtianity as *fabulous* as their own religion. And Doctor *Caſaubon*, in his book of *Credulity* and *Incredulity*, ſays, He could prove by many inſtances out of *hiſtory*, that *this doctrine has kept more people from embracing the Chriſtian faith, than any other thing he knew of.* *Emlyn's Works*, vol. I. p. 129, 130. *4th Edition*. 1746.

come a time, may the Providence of God accelerate it, when all these present impediments, and all those corrupt admixtures that so long have polluted the sacred stream of our divine religion will be removed, and Christianity be universally propagated and professed in its native purity and original simplicity. There will come a time, it transports one to contemplate the blessedness of such an happy period, when all the whole collective system of rational beings shall worship ONE GOD through a mediator, all form one happy, social, grand, and glorious society, and chant one universal chorus of praise to the ONE TRUE GOD through Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Blessed day, when the whole globe shall only be one grand temple, dedicated to God in Christ, and all nature's incense rise in one general cloud of fragrance to the vault of heaven, in honour of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in thankful commemoration of the everlasting benefits diffused among the human race by his mission and ministry. Thrice happy day, when the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, when all the inhabitants of this globe shall become the *subjects* of Christ's kingdom, and when the only *controversy* among men will be, who shall do the most good, and approve themselves the best and worthiest subjects under

such

ſuch a governor! Bleſſed times, the proſpect of them fills a good Chriſtian with *joy unſpeakable and full of glory!* What ſacred pleaſure it infuſes to think that our divine religion, which we ſee circumſcribed within confined limits, and in many polite and civilized countries almoſt overwhelmed under an incumbent maſs of ſuperſtition and human inventions, will one day cover the earth as the waters cover the bottom of the ſea, emerge from its ruins, and be univerſally embraced and profeſſed in its priſtine purity and glory. Who that values his religion, and believes it divine, the nobleſt ſyſtem of truths and doctrines that ever bleſſed the world, doth not fervently long and pray for the ſpeedy advent of this magnificent æra, frequently anticipate it in his mind, and place himſelf, in idea, in the midſt of all its bleſſedneſs! One thing I am perſuaded of, that the writings of ſuch men as *Tillotſon*, *Clarke*, *Hoadly*, *Emlyn*, *Pearce*, *Hallet*, *Foſter*, *Clayton*, *Benſon*, *Chandler*, *Lardner*, &c. will be held in ſingular honour by the men of thoſe times, and their brave and inflexible adherence to the principles of the goſpel and to the cauſe of truth and liberty, notwithſtanding all the contumely and oppoſition they met with, will be applauded and venerated by thoſe who live in this diſtinguiſhed age, and their

names

names and memories be embalmed in immortal celebrity and renown.

SECT. IV.

THE Apostle having spoken of the extent, duration, and power of Christ's KINGDOM, subjoins a very remarkable clause: BUT WHEN HE SAITH, ALL THINGS ARE PUT UNDER HIM, IT IS MANIFEST, THAT HE IS EXCEPTED, WHO DID PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM. St. Paul undoubtedly wrote this very sentence to guard Christians against mistakes. He appears to have been at the time under a divine afflatus, and to have had a clear and affecting view of that universal confusion and misery that were first occasioned in the Christian church about *three hundred* years afterwards, and, alas, have been perpetuated to the *present* age, though not with that fury and virulence with which the controversy was formerly agitated. In the preceding verse the Apostle had asserted that ALL THINGS were put in subjection to Jesus Christ—but as if he had said *too much*, and expressed himself *too generally*, he checks himself—recalls his words—and to cut off all occasion for wrangling and altercation on this subject, subjoins this qualifying sentence: but though ALL THINGS are put under his feet, it is manifest that the SUPREME GOD is *not* of the *number* of those things that are *subject* to Christ,

Christ. It is manifest HE must be *excepted* who invested Christ with this power, and subjected all things to his controul. As if the Apostle had said: All things are now under the government of Jesus, God only excepted. The God and Father of Christ must necessarily be *excepted*, because He knows no superior, admits no equal, he is possessed of peerless majesty and unrivalled supremacy. The Deity can be subject to none, be capable of no subordination, admit no compeer. When God therefore, says the Apostle, declareth that HE hath put ALL THINGS under the feet of Christ, this must be understood with the necessary restrictions and limitations, for you must except out of the number that great and glorious Being who *gave* Jesus Christ all his power in heaven and earth.—From this, Christian reader, you see how extremely cautious the Apostles of our Lord are to preserve the unity and character of the Supreme inviolate, how anxious they were to preclude any theological disputes that would eclipse the glory of the Father Almighty, and, though speaking in the highest terms of the dignity of Christ's person, the greatness of his condescension, the transcendent perfection of his virtue, and the *universality* of his government, yet how careful they always are to keep the mind of the reader fixed upon the GREAT GOD who loved the world and sent

this

this divine person, and how solicitous they are that every Christian should make pious confession of these great truths to the glory of God the Father.

SECT. V.

When the whole world shall be formed into one vast spiritual MONARCHY with Jesus at its head, and the empire of gospel truth be universally established, then will Jesus descend from heaven, and judge the *living* and the dead. This solemn transaction is the *close* of the mediatorial *kingdom*. And it is a most magnificent close. To this period it will extend, but no farther. For this passage informs that when this world is come to an end, Christ will then SURRENDER UP THE KINGDOM, which was given him, TO GOD EVEN THE FATHER: AND WHEN ALL THINGS SHALL BE SUBDUED UNTO HIM, THEN SHALL THE SON ALSO BE SUBJECT UNTO HIM WHO PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM. When Christ Jesus hath accomplished the great ends of his kingdom, when he hath made the whole world his spiritual subjects, pronounced the final sentence on the *living* and the *dead*, and assigned them all their everlasting state, then he will deliver up the reins of *government*, which he held so long and with so much honour and success, into the hands of God, even the Father, as a *general* after all his

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conquests

conquests delivers up his *commission* to his *Sovereign*. This is the sublime and solemn conclusion of Christ's KINGDOM. It was at *first* the reward of his perfect virtue and consummate worthiness, it is *now* conducted by the noblest, wisest, and happiest measures, and will *finally* be surrendered up at the great day to that glorious BEING who first conferred it. So that we can trace, you see, Reader, the *beginning*, *duration*, and *end* of this magnificent EMPIRE. All, you see, terminates in God. All finally redounds to the glory and honour of the great Supreme. Christ's kingdom is a limited one, of vast extent indeed and of great duration; but there will come a day when this kingdom will be no more, when it will have a final period, for when the end cometh he will deliver it up to God the Father. What august sentiments should this passage of scripture teach us to form of the peerless majesty and unrivalled greatness of the blessed God, whose supremacy our Lord so solemnly recognizeth by this public surrender. *My Father is greater than I*, said our Lord; and we see it verified and illustrated in this grand transaction. Then shall the *son* also himself be *subject* unto HIM that put all things under him. To this great and glorious Being, even to God the Father, will Jesus Christ, at the end of this world, when the process of the judgment day is finished, deliver up his

kingdom,

kingdom, resign all the authority with which he was invested, approach the throne of the Divinity, and lay down his scepter at the footstool of the Supreme Majesty. How does this aggrandize the greatness of God! We can never speak too transcendently, and think too reverently, of the dignity of Christ's person, and the greatness of his condescension; but let us ever remember WHO it was that loved the world and sent Jesus Christ, let us ever remember the great source and fountain of all, the love, mercy, and goodness of God. What manner of love hath the *Father* bestowed upon us. Blessed be the *God* and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. I mention this, because great numbers of Christians, when they think on the benefits and blessings of their redemption, are apt to forget the Great God, and seldom to mention him, as if they were hardly under any obligations to him. Whereas the scripture refers every thing to God, directs our thoughts to HIM as the original author of all these blessings, and engages us to contemplate this great and good Being under the amiable and endearing view of the *Father of our Lord*, as *sending his son*, as *not sparing his son*, as empowering him to work all the miracles he performed, as raising him from the dead, as exalting him to his right hand, as giving him a kingdom, and, in this passage, *again* receiving

from

from the hands of Christ that government which He committed to him to manage and superintend for a limited duration.

SECT. VI.

The Apostle concludes with informing us what will be the final result, after Christ hath thus delivered up his kingdom to the Almighty. God will be all in all. *Then shall the Son himself become subject to* him *who did put all things under him*, that God may be all in all. *After* this distinguished date, the termination of the Mediatorial reign, the Supreme God will assume *universal* government, and from *that* period, throughout all the endless ages of Eternity, will fill *all in all* with his boundless immensity!

SECT. VII.

This important passage of scripture, comprizing some of the noblest discoveries of the gospel, is replete with many grand ideas, and contains many excitations to devotion and virtue. For example: What enlarged conceptions doth it teach us to form of the *extent*, *duration* and *power* of Christ's kingdom. *He hath put all things under his feet.* The grandeur and vastness of this empire is best seen by a comparison. The most potent monarchs on our globe have dominions

nions very limited, and territories circumscribed within a comparatively small compass. But the dominion of Jesus is universal, and comprehendeth the whole system of Beings in *heaven* and *earth*. Earthly kings and princes have their inspection confined to a few objects, and their attention is principally engrossed by those who *immediately* surround their persons. But the Messiah, God's great vicegerent and regent, is present in every part of his most extensive dominions, and the concerns and interests of every individual of his subjects, in *every* place, are a constant object of his compassionate solicitude and notice. Earthly monarchs frequently govern by unjust laws and iniquitous regulations, are swayed by humor and caprice, are duped by favourites and sycophants, exercise tyranny and despotism over their slaves and vassals, and harrass them by every method of cruel and unfeeling oppression. But the basis of the Mediatorial kingdom is founded in justice, wisdom, and benevolence, his spiritual subjects are free, enjoy the truest freedom and liberty, that liberty which virtue gives, and the laws of Christianity confirm and establish.

Moreover, this celebrated passage of sacred scripture greatly aggrandizes the character of God the Father, and in the most striking light represents to us his peerless and unrivalled

Supremacy. When the Judgment is concluded, and the fate of mankind is decided, we ſee Jeſus Chriſt, after this ſolemn proceſs, approach the preſence of this glorious Being, and lay down his ſceptre at the footſtool of his throne. From *which* period, to all eternity, God will be all in all. This ſhould teach us not to eclipſe the glory of the great God, not to confound the ſon with his father, but to repreſent them to our thoughts and meditations, as the ſcripture always repreſents them, God the Father as loving the world and ſending *his ſon*, and Jeſus Chriſt as the *perſon* ſent by him to redeem and ſave us: God the Father giving Chriſt a kingdom, and Jeſus Chriſt, at a *certain time*, delivering up *again* this *kingdom* to the Being from whom he received it.

Finally, What pleaſing thoughts doth this paſſage inſpire: *That Chriſt muſt reign till he hath put down all rule and all authority and power, and ſubjected all his enemies under his feet.* That a period will arrive, the moſt magnificent period in the annals of this world, when the Chriſtian religion will be univerſal. This is the event after which the Apoſtle John paſſionately aſpired, when, after he had been favoured with all thoſe revelations, he exclaimed with devout ardor, *Come! Lord Jeſus, come quickly!* Delightful reflection, grateful to every benevolent mind,

mind, to think, that all those countries, which now lie in such deplorable darkness, will one day be illuminated with gospel-light, all *pagan* ignorance, *mahommedan* imposture, and *popish* delusion exterminated, and all the nations of the world, to the utmost verge of the globe, all harmoniously accord in the worship of ONE SUPREME GOD through a *mediator*. Who that has this magnificent prospect, spread before his view, can forbear pronouncing with holy and devout fervor, that petition in our daily prayers: THY KINGDOM COME! May the Providence of God accelerate this glorious period! We rejoice in the thoughts of it, though none of us, or probably of our children, shall behold this blessed event.

DISSERTATION V.

ON THE

CAUSES which probably conſpired to produce our SAVIOUR'S AGONY.

Qui vero adverſus ſæviſſimos caſus ſe extollit, et ea mala, quibus alii opprimantur, evertit, ipſas miſerias infularum loco habet: quando ita affecti ſumus, ut nihil æquè magnam apud nos admirationem occupet, quam homo fortiter miſer. *Senecæ Conſolat. ad Helviam. Tom.* I. p. 194. *Edit. Grenov.* 1672.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Dissertation was composed about fourteen years ago. Upon reviewing it I saw no reason to depart from the theory and sentiments it advances. The *manner*, in which it is compiled, requests the reader's candid and favourable censure. The reason, which originally induced me to write it, was my dissatisfaction with the schemes, which gloomy and systematic Divines have devised to account for our Lord's Agony; some ascribing it to the unappeased wrath of Almighty God, now hurled in all its tremendous vehemence upon this illustrious Sufferer; others to the temptation and onset of the Devil, into whose tyranny, during this hour of darkness, he was freely delivered; and others to the whole accumulated weight of the sins of the whole world, which the wisdom and justice of God appointed that he should now sustain, in order that he might experimentally feel

their infinite demerit, and, by ſupporting, in his own perſon, the oppreſſive load, accompliſh the proper atonement and expiation of them. I hope an attempt to vindicate the equity, rectitude, and goodneſs of God, and to juſtify the conduct of our Lord on this occaſion, by evincing that there is nothing in this tranſaction which eclipſes, or in the leaſt diminiſhes the luſtre of his divine character, will be deemed laudable, however I may have failed in the execution of my deſign. I had not ſeen, 'till within theſe few weeks, Mr. *Moore*'s excellent pamphlet on this ſubject, which was publiſhed by Doctors LARDNER and FLEMING, and printed by *Noon*, 1757. It gives me great pleaſure and ſatisfaction, as it is no ſmall confirmation of this Eſſay, to find that the reflections and ſentiments of this ingenious writer, on this ſubject, have ſo happily coincided and harmonized with my own.

DISSERTATION V.

BY the adverſaries of our divine religion it has often been ſuggeſted that the concluding ſcenes of our Redeemer's life are attended with circumſtances which reflect no great honour upon his character. From that expreſſion, *My God! my God! why haſt thou forſaken me*, one of the moſt eminent of the Deiſts aſſerteth, that our Saviour, a little before his death, publickly renounced the cauſe in which he had been engaged, and even died in that renunciation. How injurious and falſe this aſperſion is, need not be evinced, ſince the whole tenor of our Saviour's hiſtory contradicts it, and every where diſplays a moſt exalted and conſummate virtue. It is in the higheſt degree abſurd to ſuppoſe, that our Lord ſhould publickly abjure his religion, and yet die to confirm it and give it its laſt ſanction. He came to bear witneſs to the truth, and he gave the ſtrongeſt proof of the juſtneſs of his pretenſions to the character he aſſumed, that he was the Meſſiah and Lawgiver of the world, and that the cauſe in which

he

he had embarked, was the cause of God and Truth, for he sealed this cause with his blood.

His agony in the garden of Gethsemanè has been very undeservedly the subject of calumny and detraction. It has not infrequently been intimated, that during this scene of sufferings our Lord's behaviour was very far from being consistent with the rest of his life, and that he meanly and abjectly shuddered at the prospect of calamities which, notwithstanding, it was his destiny to meet *. Persons, who have rejected Christianity, and alledged the causes of their rejecting it, have insinuated, among other things, that this Agony of grief hath all the appearance of a dishonourable timidity, that our Saviour in a dispirited manner sunk under the afflictions which he had rashly brought upon himself, by assuming the character of a Reformer—whereas, if he had been conscious that his doctrines were true, and that his mission was divinely authorized, he would have sustained them with an heroic fortitude and magnanimity worthy such a cause. Instead of this, in the prospect of his last sufferings, he is overwhelmed in despondency, and betrays a pusillanimity unworthy a common philosopher. Instead of embracing with virtuous transport so noble an occasion, now

* See *Voltaire*'s late treatise *Sur la Tolerance.*

now offered him, of attesting the truth of his mission and ministry by sufferings, he shrinks back at the view of them, falls into dishonourable tremors, is plunged into the last terror and confusion, and with vehement importunity implores Almighty God to extricate and save him from them. *Let this cup pass from me!*

But if we impartially consider the history in which this agony of distress and sorrow is recorded, we shall be convinced that it was not want either of virtue or of fortitude to sustain his impending sufferings, which dictated these words. There is nothing in them inconsistent with the general tenor of his conduct—Nothing in them that can make us suspect the truth of his pretensions, or that in the least diminishes the divine worth and dignity of his character. Our Saviour was cloathed with human nature, and is he to be censured for having the sensibilities of human nature? Is his conduct to be loaded with reproach and contumely, because he was not a proud unfeeling Stoic *, and did not manifest

* Was there not something pusillanimous and inconstant in this part of our Saviour's conduct? I answer, No. Those expressions are far too harsh, and cannot be applied to our Lord without manifest injustice. He had not, indeed, that intrepidity, for which the rude heroes of history are celebrated, who were fearless and undaunted in their greatest dangers.

ſeſt an entire apathy and inſenſibility in his ſufferings? Is it any diſparagement to our bleſſed Lord, any imputation on his wiſdom or his virtue, that he was affected with the ſorrows and ſufferings of humanity? "Jeſus, as a judicious writer has well obſerved, was ſenſible of

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dangers. What then? Was a character expected in him that required a peculiar warmth of the blood and juices, and the impetus of ſome criminal paſſion, to form and exhibit? Natural courage is well known to be mechanical, and to riſe and fall with a certain temperature of the body. —The paſſions, ſays Mr. *Grove*, which have moſt filled the world with *heroes*, are *vain-glory*, and a dread of the reproach of cowardice. *Moral Philoſophy, Vol.* II. p. 259. What is to be looked for in the bleſſed Jeſus, is, a perfectly moral character. Now a manly virtuous courage is ſo far from being incompatible with, that it ſuppoſes fear. For as that is inſpired with a ſenſe of what is juſt and honourable, the fear of infamy to one's-ſelf, or of injury to others, muſt needs take place, inaſmuch as the objects are evils that ought, if poſſible, to be avoided, and when, and in whomſoever thoſe fears ſhall coincide with the natural fear of death, a paſſive fortitude is all that can be expected.

"And as to *inconſtancy* of mind, I aſk, Who is there among the ſons of men, or what are they, whom the circumſtances of time and place, in reſpect to a cruel and ignominious death, will not ſenſibly affect?—A perſon, doomed to ſuffer as a ſtate criminal, may indeed put on the *ſtoic* on ſuch an occaſion, and in point of prudence, as it is called, or for the ſake of his honour, ſtifle his paſſions from

of his own and others sufferings, and conceived a dread and horror at them. He was so *sore-amazed and full of grief*, as earnestly to pray, that if it were possible, the cup might pass away from him. A true picture this of genuine humanity in distress. It is natural to us to hate pain, and to have an abhorrence of misery. The constitution of our beings requires it should be so. It is the first and strongest principle the Creator hath cast into the human frame. The philosophy taught in the heathen world by *Zeno* and his followers, that pains and afflictions are no evils, and that a wise man should be hardened against all sense of them, was truly perversive, not

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from the view of others. And no doubt but that this has often been the case. But our Lord acted upon no such mean motives. He felt things to impress him differently, and he told what he felt. The mind is not answerable for these different impressions. They are unavoidable to it, and the result of the human frame. Had not Jesus shewn a reluctancy to the evils now before him, the reality of his sufferings might justly have been called in question. And so far was he in this his behaviour from acting an *inconsistent*, or *inconstant part*, that notwithstanding he felt a greater uneasiness to himself than at any other time, he stood firm to the noble resolution he had formed, of an entire submissive obedience to the Divine will.—There is then no impeachment of the courage and constancy of our Lord. His character remains unsullied, yea, shines through the darkest cloud that ever passed over him." MOORE *on our Saviour's Agony*, p. 88, 89, 90.

not perfective of the nature of man. To feel calamities when they come upon us, or upon others, and to give vent to our tears *, is much more congruous and suitable to our frame and station, than the apathy and rant of the stoics. We are connected with flesh and blood, made with selfish and social affections and passions, and placed here in a state of discipline: and a tender susceptible temper better becomes us, and will sooner perfect our virtue, than insensibility and fool-hardiness. This consideration alone, if there were none other, should make us not ashamed of Jesus in his agony in the garden, or on the cross †."

The following account of this aweful scene is exhibited by the four Evangelists. "When Jesus had spoken these words [that consolatory discourse recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of St. John's gospel] he went forth

* They who of all writers undertake to imitate nature most, oft introduce even their heroes weeping. See how *Homer* represents *Ulysses*, Od. i. ver. 151. ii. ver. 7, 8. The tears of men are in truth very different from the cries and ejulations of children. They are silent streams, and flow from other causes: commonly some tender, or perhaps philosophical, reflection. It is easy to see how hard hearts and dry eyes come to be fashionable. But, for all that, it is certain the *Glandulæ lachrymales* are not made for nothing. *Religion of Nature delineated*, p. 139. *Note.*

† MOORE, *on our Saviour's Agony*, p. 102, 103.

forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden [Gethsemanè] into which he entered and his disciples. And he saith to the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful, to be sore amazed, and very heavy. And he saith to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tarry ye here and watch. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and fell on the ground and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done! And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them fast asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away the *second* time, and prayed, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done! And he came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy, neither wist they what to answer him. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the *third* time, saying the same words. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it

were,

were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and he saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come: Behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners *."—Let the reader figure to himself our Lord's situation at this time, and consider what images must necessarily obtrude upon his mind. His ministry was now closed—he was in a few moments to be apprehended and treacherously delivered into the power of those who had long thirsted for his blood—his beloved disciples were going to abandon him in his adversity—and in two days time, by wicked hands, he would be crucified and slain. Jesus now had a strong conscious perception of all these impending calamities. Let the reader's imagination represent to him the state of our Saviour's mind in this aweful crisis—and with the full idea of his situation before him, let him consider, whether the *following* painful reflections crowding into his soul, in this melancholy hour, might not naturally produce that scene of distress and horror the sacred writers have recorded.

One

* I have formed the *several* circumstances related by *different* evangelists into one continued narrative.

SECT. I.

One cause, which no doubt greatly contributed to distress our blessed Saviour, now his ministry was concluded, was the distressing reflection that his painful labours and benevolent attempts to convert and reform the Jews had proved generally unsuccessful. In the fulness of time God the Father had sent him from heaven among men, and empowered him to work many stupendous and beneficent miracles in confirmation of his divine mission and character. In the space of three years and an half he had in person visited the cities, towns, and villages of Judea, and in all of them had effected such astonishing operations and supernatural cures, as could evidently be ascribed to nothing but to the immediate power and agency of God. He had delivered to his country a perfect system of religion and morals, enforced by the strongest encouragements, and recommended by his own virtuous and irreproachable conduct. And yet his conduct, his doctrines, his precepts, his miracles, had been able to make little impression on the hearts of this depraved people. They despised the meanness of his birth and the obscurity of his family. They were prejudiced against the place of his education, and declared it impossible that a prophet should ever arise out of

Nazareth. So averſe had they been from all conviction and inſtruction, and ſo deliberately determined to ſhut their eyes againſt the cleareſt light, that they attributed the moſt amazing diſplays of divine power to a compact and intercourſe with Beelzebub. This man doth not work miracles, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Inſtead of attending his public miniſtry with minds ſincerely diſpoſed for the reception of truth, they contrived low clandeſtine arts to enſnare him, and hoped, from ſome incautious expreſſions, into which they might betray him, to accuſe him as a traitor to the Roman government, and effectuate his condemnation and death as an enemy to Cæſar. Theſe were the illiberal and diſhonourable expedients they employed to murder the Meſſiah. Are ſuch principles and diſpoſitions as theſe friendly to truth and virtue? Is a nation, which manifeſts ſuch a character as this, and frames ſuch meaſures as theſe againſt the life of a holy and good man for remonſtrating againſt their ſuperſtition, bigotry, and immoralities, to be convinced by the force of evidence, and moved by the charms of an amiable example? So far were they from examining his doctrines and pretenſions to the high character he aſſumed, with coolneſs and candour, that they practiſed every method to prevent them from being admitted, and excluded

thoſe

those from their synagogues who openly professed them. How determined and inveterate their virulence was against our Lord's person and usefulness, we may judge from this single most egregious instance of it, their solemnly deliberating in council to destroy *Lazarus*, merely for being the subject of one of his miracles *. Impossible, therefore, was it for our Saviour to propagate his religion in a nation so prejudiced and depraved. All his attempts to make them virtuous and everlastingly happy proved ineffectual.

Now this wrung his benevolent heart with the acutest anguish. The consideration that his country should have rejected that system of divine truths he had been delegated from God his Father to deliver to them, overwhelmed him in the deepest sorrow and distress. When he *now* reviewed the past years of his ministry, it filled him with great and painful concern, that his miracles had been so numerous, but his success so very inconsiderable. He had made it the uniform study of his life to diffuse happiness around him, to do good to the souls and bodies of men, had performed the most benevolent cures, taught the most excellent doctrines,

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* But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death. *John* xiii. 10.

exhibited a perfect character, to engage his country to embrace a Religion which came recommended and enforced by so many evidences of its credibility and divine authority. But what converts had he made, what effects had the cause of God and truth, of liberty and immortality, produced?—*This* was the painful reflection which *now* wounded his soul. He had come to his own, but his own had not received him! That nation, whose guardian angel he had probably ever been, and whom he had anxiously superintended in every period of time and change of government, had *now* rejected his person and his doctrines, and were going to imbrue their hands in his blood as an impostor. This disingenuity and ingratitude transfixed his soul, and a painful review of the insuperable prejudices, enormous corruptions, and determined impenitency of his country must necessarily oppress him, in this *hour of darkness*, with very deep distress, and contribute its weight of woes to produce that agony which he now endured.

SECT. II.

ANOTHER cause which conduced to occasion this extreme dejection and sorrow of our blessed Saviour, was the perception he had that he would immediately be abandoned by all his disciples

ples and friends in these his last extremities. If my readers have ever known, by unhappy experience, the cruelty and infelicity of being deserted by a friend, at a time of impending adversity and distress, let Them now recall to mind what They suffered on that occasion, and transfer their thoughts to our Saviour's sensibilities in the like circumstances. His disciples had been the companions of his labours. He had selected them from the world to be his attendants and friends. To them he had unbosomed his soul. *Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end*, says St. John. He maintained for them a most faithful and affectionate love from the time he chose them to the last period of his life. They had relinquished their families, their occupations, and all their connections, to adhere to him and his cause. They had during the whole course of his ministry accompanied him from place to place, and mutually shared with him the reproach and odium of the world. But O dire reverse! O Adversity, how seldom art thou a witness to faithful friendship! The companions of his labours, from whose fidelity he might reasonably expect consolation, and whose firm adherence to his person and interests he might naturally hope would now give a sanction to the cause he and they had espoused, dishonourably desert him. When these last

calamities invade him, lo, they fly *, and ſuffer perſecution and death to overwhelm him, alone and unſupported. At a time when probably he ſhould want the aids of true friendſhip moſt, to atteſt his innocence and aſſuage his ſufferings, they have abandoned him, and appear aſhamed of the cauſe in which they had all embarked.

But not only their unfaithfulneſs and diſgraceful deſertion of him, but the ingratitude and treachery of Judas, no doubt, in theſe moments he now ſpent in the garden of Gethſemanè, muſt wound his generous mind with the moſt cruel anguiſh. We find that this baſeneſs of Judas gave our Lord great diſtreſs. "When Jeſus had thus ſaid, he was *troubled in ſpirit*, and teſtified and ſaid, Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, *one* of *you* ſhall *betray* me!" *John* xiii. 21. The reflection, that in that ſmall number, whom he had ſelected to be his particular friends and companions, one ſhould prove ſo ungrateful and perfidious as for a paltry ſum to betray him to his enemies, and that in a very ſhort time he ſhould ſee this very perſon, whom he had admitted into his friendſhip, heading a mob to apprehend him, the bitter reflection muſt rend a boſom ſo ſuſceptible as our Saviour's appeareth to be.

"Great

* At ſimul intonuit, fugiunt, nec noſcitur ulli
Agminibus comitum qui modo cinctus erat.
Ovid. Triſt.

"Great minds have a delicacy in their perception. They feel ingratitude more than others, as they are less deserving of it. And indeed the best of men have met with this sort of ill usage. *David*, more than once, deplores the like, in language which shews how sensibly he was touched. "Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me. For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance *."

Such was the situation of our Saviour. Rejected by the Jews: abandoned by his disciples. The review of life, painful, the *immediate* prospect full of horror. Invaded with such complicated distress, can we wonder that he should so earnestly implore Almighty God to save him from this hour, and to let this cup pass from him that he might not drink it. It is the natural language of piety and virtue in distress: the first prayer which a dependent creature in afflictive circumstances addresses to heaven.

SECT. III.

ANOTHER cause which may justly be assigned to account for this agony and the petition he

* See *Moore's Enquiry*, p. 46.

preferred to God, was the ſtrong perception of that inſult, ignominy, and torture he was ſhortly to endure. The perception of theſe dreadful evils, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, greatly impreſſed his mind, and ſtrongly affected his exquiſitely tender and delicate ſenſibilities. His mind anticipated all that cruel and inhuman treatment he ſhould very ſhortly experience—the immediate arreſt and ſeizure of his perſon—his illegal trial—his impriſonment as an impoſtor—his outrage from the Roman ſoldiers, who would treat him with the laſt indignities, ſcourge him, clothe him in robes of mock royalty, and inſult him as the rival and enemy of Cæſar—and, as the completion of all theſe evils, his condemnation to ſuffer the ignominious and excruciating death of crucifixion. Over theſe ſcenes his mind *now* brooded. He had the full idea of them impreſſed on his ſoul. In the dire apprehenſion of theſe impending horrors, a mind poſſeſſed of ſuch exquiſite ſenſibilities muſt ſuffer great depreſſion. The view of theſe approaching evils forced from him that petition, Father, ſave me from this hour! By which is manifeſtly meant the hour of death, as *Grotius* judiciouſly interprets it. It is to this the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews refers, when he ſays, That our Lord in the days of his fleſh offered up prayers and ſupplications with ſtrong crying and

tears,

tears, unto him that was able to ſave from death. *Heb.* v. 7. I leave it to my reader's imagination to repreſent the ſituation of his Saviour in theſe moments. Let any perſon, endowed with the feelings of humanity, declare, whether in ſuch circumſtances the petition, *Let this cup paſs from me*, be not natural language, and an exit big with barbarity, contumely, and horror, is not to be deprecated. If the human mind ſhudders at the fancied repreſentation of pain ſo exquiſite and durable, and a death ſo excruciating and reproachful, who can with any conſiſtency and honour cenſure our Saviour, in ſuch a ſituation for diſcovering a ſenſe of it? We might as reaſonably blame him for being a man, and for having the common affections, feelings, and ſenſations of human nature. Was our Saviour a frantic and extravagant Stoic, whoſe divine tranquillity, pain and human evils could not ſolicit? Did he ever teach his followers that pain was no evil, or in his own perſon ever diſcover a total apathy and unconſciouſneſs of the calamities and ſufferings with which he encountered? Nothing leſs true. He aſſumed humanity, and had all the ſenſibilities of humanity. He had, ſays the Apoſtle, a feeling of our infirmities, being tempted in all points juſt as we are. Our Lord diſcovered great ſenſibility of ſoul. Jeſus wept—ſhed tears at the

grave

grave of his amiable deceaſed friend Lazarus. Tears were alſo obſerved to ſtream from his eyes, when he looked down upon the city and uttered thoſe pathetic expreſſions over it. O, that thou, even thou hadſt known the things that belong to thy everlaſting peace; but now they are hidden from thine eyes! He had an exquiſite ſenſe of human miſery. In theſe unhappy exigencies he would offer up prayers and ſupplications with ſtrong crying and tears. And could brutal inſult, illegal condemnation, opprobrious mockery, diſgraceful impriſonment, cruel buffeting and ſcourging, a mock inveſtiture with royalty, public ignominy and crucifixion invade his heart, unaffected and unimpreſſed? Would not the certain immediate proſpect of this train of evils make ſtrong impreſſions on a mind ſo ſuſceptible of ſtrong impreſſions? Had he met and ſuſtained the ſhock with unfeeling unconcernedneſs, and ſupported theſe his ſufferings with an abſolute inſenſibility of them, it would then have been aſſerted that he was not *really* inveſted with human nature, and that the aſſertions of his hiſtorians, that he was a man, were entirely hypothetical and imaginary. If he had endured theſe evils with a torpid compoſure, it would have been ſaid that he never felt them, and that the human form he exhibited to the world was merely ideal and viſionary. So that

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in this case strong objections would have been formed against the truth and reality of his person. Had he met his sufferings with a fearless intrepidity, and appeared in the midst of them with an idiot serenity, the world, I am persuaded, would have been *more* dissatisfied with his conduct, would have formed it into an argument against the truth of the Christian religion, and reviled its author as a frantic stoic or an unfeeling Enthusiast.

Do we admire some of the Philosophers for their contempt of pain? Do we applaud their boasted tranquillity of mind, which no tortures could discompose, and secretly wish that our Lord had sustained his affliction with as great constancy and fortitude as some of them? But let me freely declare, That if we admire these old sages for their doctrines of insensibility of pain, and for their serenity of mind in the midst of the most racking disorders, we really admire them for philosophical madness, and a wild extravagant infatuated quixotism. Our passions are part of our nature. They can never be eradicated. We can by no arts and arguments annihilate our sensibilities. It is phrenzy to attempt or to affect it. Our Saviour never taught, or practised upon, such an unnatural system. He had the same perception of human misery with ourselves, and suffered in the conflict,

flict, just as we do. Dr. WHITBY delivers it as his opinion, That this extreme dejection and agony of our Saviour arose from the strongly impressed apprehension of those dreadful sufferings which would so speedily befall him, and farther says, that it is extremely difficult to assign any other cause of this excess of sorrow and dispiritedness which *now* seized him. Some considerable time before, the thought of this violent exit seems greatly to have impressed our Saviour's mind. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished! Now is my soul troubled: but what shall I say, Father, save me from this hour. Consider the wretchedness of such a death!—The exquisite torture of having the hands and feet perforated with nails—being fastened to a cross—and for days and nights continuing, as many of these wretches did, in all this agonizing pain, till all the powers of life were exhausted in a lingering and most miserable manner. Think of this, and then censure our blessed Lord, for being appalled at the prospect. Think of what he suffered, and you will see cause to justify the petition he preferred to heaven amidst these pangs: My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me! Impress your minds with an affecting sense of a person so illustrious, of innocence so distressed, of sufferings so intense

and

and durable, of indignities and insults so dishonourable and injurious, of a death so excruciating and full of horror, and of such a spectacle displayed before angels and men, and then reflect whether his agony in the garden of Gethsemanè may not be accounted for. Then consider, whether you cannot *rationally* account for *such* a supplication in *such* a situation: O, my Father, let this cup pass from me! It was the near prospect and anticipation of such sufferings and such an exit as this, which made him, in the days of his flesh, offer up the most importunate requests and supplications, with strong cries and tears, to that Being who was able to extricate him from death—and he was heard in that he feared.

SECT. IV.

It is highly probable that at this time our Lord had a strong perception of the various troubles and persecutions to which his disciples and followers would be subjected, in consequence of their attachment to him, and his religion. This thought would greatly depress him, and deeply wound his tender spirit. And I make no doubt but the prescience and distinct view he had of that multiplicity of sorrows and sufferings which would invade his adherents after his death, greatly contributed to his present agony and extreme

extreme dejection. He knew they had to contend with innumerable difficulties in attempting to reform a superstitious and corrupt world. He evidently foresaw that the system of religion and morals he had delivered, would every where be spoken against, would, on account of its genius and nature, prove a stumbling block to the *Jews*, and to the *Greeks* foolishness. He knew that for propagating his religion in the world, and for their inviolable adherence to his cause, they would endure the most miserable torments and deaths which the genius of men could devise, or the cruelty and odium of persecutors inflict.—All these scenes of future persecution *now* crowded into his mind, and the painful anticipation overwhelmed him. It was his exquisite benevolent feelings which occasioned this extreme distress. The reflection, that so many *innocent* persons should be involved in these calamities for embracing and spreading his doctrine, was too painful for him to support *. They were for several centuries to struggle under the incumbent weight of *established* error and superstition—prince and magistrate, priest and people, would be confederated against them—they were to wrestle, not only against

* ————Τωνδε γαρ πλεον φερω
Το πενθος η και της εκης ψυχης περι.
Sophocles Oed. Tyran. v. 93.

against flesh and blood, the common prejudices of mankind, but to contend with principalities and powers and spiritual rulers in high places—the secular sword would be every where unsheathed to extirpate the cause in which they had embarked—they would be driven from city to city, from country to country—*Jews* and *Greeks* differing in other things, but agreeing in this, to exterminate them and their religion from the world—they would be the objects of such implacable odium and detestation, that whoever should kill them, would be esteemed as doing God eminent service—they were to endure poverty and indigence for their unshaken constancy to their principles, to wander about in deserts and mountains, and to seek refuge in dens and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—they were to be precipitated into prisons and dungeons, to be exposed to the fury of wild beasts, to afford sport and diversion for a brutal rabble, and to be made a spectacle to the world, to angels and men—for the sake of Christ they were to be killed all the day long, to be accounted as sheep for the slaughter——These subsequent calamities our Lord perfectly knew. He saw the gathering storm which would soon break over their heads. He had met with every injury and indignity for his endeavours to reform a wicked nation, and from his own experience

rience he knew, that the ſame principles and conduct in them would produce the ſame conſequences, and render them equally obnoxious to a depraved world. He knew they had every oppoſition to expect from thoſe whoſe religious errors they condemned, and whoſe immoralities they freely cenſured——that ſuperſtitious and wicked perſons, of all others, would moſt ſtrenuouſly exert themſelves to deſtroy a *kingdom* of truth and righteouſneſs, by murdering thoſe who attempted to erect and eſtabliſh it.—This reflection awakened all his tenderneſs, and his benevolence made him feel exquiſite anguiſh for his faithful ſuffering followers. Here his affections were powerfully excited, and his painful ſolicitude for the future fortunes of his diſciples overpowered his ſoul. He loved them with the greateſt warmth and delicacy of affection—Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end—and this love cauſed him to enter intimately into their future diſtreſſes, and affectionately to ſhare them by a generous condolence. He antedated them, he repreſented them ſtrongly to his mind, and by a painful anticipation, and exquiſite ſympathy, now felt all the ſevere force and weight of theſe evils. What mental anxiety and diſtreſs he felt on account of their future miſeries and perſecutions, appears from that conſolatory diſcourſe, recorded

by

by St. *John*, which was addressed to these his mournful and melancholy friends, who were in the last dejection at the thought of his departure from them. If the world hate you, you know it hated me before it hated you. Remember the word, that I said to you, the servant is not greater than his Lord: If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: If they have insidiously watched my words, they will insidiously watch yours also: Verily I say unto you, you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice—With great reason, therefore, we may suppose that all these scenes of future woe *now* crowded into our Lord's mind at once. Love, pity, sympathy, benevolence, were the great emotions and passions which laboured in his breast. The opposition his cause would meet with in the world, and the dreadful sufferings in which those would be involved who maintained it, wrung his heart with the acutest anguish, and overwhelmed it in the deepest sorrow. This painful reflection, conspiring with the other causes I have alledged, produced the deplorable situation here recorded, rendered him unequal to the shock, made the assistance of an angel necessary to support and strengthen him, and caused him to sweat, as * it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

* Observe, this is only a *simile* or comparison of the Evangelist to *illustrate* the *profuseness* of our Saviour's sweat.

SECT. V.

It appeareth to me, alſo, that the impending calamities and ruin of his country, in conſequence of their enormities and of their ingratitude and wickedneſs in rejecting and crucifying him, may be reckoned as one of the principal cauſes which produced this agony. It is a very unjuſt and groundleſs objection which *Lord Shafteſbury* hath advanced againſt the Chriſtian religion, that the author of it never recommended private friendſhip and the love of our country. Every

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Εγενετο δε ιδρως αυτου ΩΣΕΙ θρομβοι αιματος. *Luke* xxii. 44. Juſt as all the four Evangeliſts, intending to give their reader a juſt idea of the *rapid deſcent* of the holy Spirit upon Chriſt, after his baptiſm, *compare* it to the *velocity* of a dove ΩΣΕΙ περιςεραν—not that the holy Spirit aſſumed the *ſhape* of a dove, but deſcended and alighted upon our Lord with the *rapidity* with which a dove darts from the ſky to the earth. *Probably* there was *now* the *ſame* appearance as at the day of Pentecoſt. The word θρομβοι is very beautiful and expreſſive. It does not occur in the New Teſtament but only in *this* paſſage. It ſignifies *large globules*, thick and clammy clots of gore or ſweat, pitch, milk, &c. *Heſychius* explains θρομβος by αιμα παχυ, πεπηγος ως βουνοι. Ποταμος αιμα τῳ υδατι θρομβους ασφαλτου αναδιδοι πολλους. Mixed with the water, the river ſendeth up many large clots of bitumen. *Herodotus*, *Clio*, p. 386, *Vol.* I. *Glaſg.* Ως εν γαλακτι θρομβον αιματος σπασαι. *Æſchyli Choëph. verſ.* 531. Θρομβῳ δ' εμιξεν αιματος φιλον γαλα. *Ibid. verſ.* 544. Αιματος θρομβους μελανας. Large black globules of blood. *Hippocrates*, *Lib.* III. §. 19. *Edit. Linden.*

Every one, who is in the least acquainted with the life of Christ, cannot but know that our Lord was an example of both these. From his most intimate friends, the Apostles, he selected one, whose amiable temper and disposition appear to have been most similar to his own, and whom he honoured with a peculiar delicacy and tenderness of affection. And how well he loved his *native country* appears from the whole of his life. He confined his instructions and labours solely to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, declaring that to them only he was sent. Never was there a philosopher or heroe who loved his country with a more generous ardor of the truest and noblest benevolence than our blessed Saviour, if a constant study and active disposition to promote the welfare and happiness of the community in which one is born, may be styled the love of one's country. Dear to us, says TULLY, are our parents, our children, our relations, our friends; but our country comprizeth and embraceth every thing that is dear and valuable to us. In conformity to this maxim our Saviour really acted. He broke every parental and fraternal connection, all the ties of consanguinity, and forsook all the endearments of private life to consult the welfare of his country. What can be more pathetic and expressive of the warmest benevolence, than

that complaint and lamentation he uttered over his incorrigible and devoted country. "O that thou, even thou hadſt known in this thy day the things that belong to thine everlaſting peace!" The ſtrong perception he had of their imminent calamities, forced him in this plaintive and affectionate manner to deplore their wretched fate. One of the Evangeliſts informs us, that when he drew near the city he wept over it. Generous minds feel ſtrongly for the unhappy. It was benevolence, pity and love for his unfortunate country which called forth his grief, and cauſed him to ſhed theſe tributary tears, at once the affecting memorials of his love, and the aweful tokens of its approaching doom. As he had a perfect knowledge, ſo he had a painful ſympathetic ſenſe of thoſe dreadful calamities which would ſhortly overwhelm his country, for their enormities in diſobeying and murdering the Lord of life. "Daughters of Jeruſalem, ſaid he to the women who were beating their breaſts and deploring his unhappy fate, when he was led to Calvary, weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves and for your children: for behold the days are coming in which they ſhall ſay, Bleſſed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breaſts that never gave ſuck. Then ſhall they begin to ſay to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; for if

they

they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"—Accordingly, in about *forty* years after his resurrection, the Romans invaded Judæa—spread desolation every where—at last invested the capital—inclosed an infinite number of people in it, who had then come from all parts to celebrate the passover—drew lines of circumvallation round them—and thus devoted them to all the miseries of famine, pestilence, and war. After incredible numbers had perished by mutual assassinations and famine, the city was stormed and plundered—the temple burnt—the buildings demolished—the walls razed from the foundations—the greatest part of the Jews were put to the sword—the rest sold for slaves into foreign countries. These calamities, in severer than which never was any nation involved, had their completion in *Adrian*'s time, who published an edict prohibiting every *Jew*, on pain of death, from setting a foot in Judæa.

All these scenes of national calamity and ruin our Lord perfectly knew—and the painful apprehension and view made him commiserate his falling country. What affection, pity, sympathy, and sorrow are mingled in that pathetic exclamation. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest those that are sent to thee! How often would I have

gathered thy children, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but you would not! Therefore is your houſe left unto you deſolate"—Now if our Saviour's mind, in the courſe of his miniſtry, was ſo much affected and depreſſed by the thought of his country's diſobedience, and of their deplorable ruin the certain effect of it, how much more may we juſtly ſuppoſe muſt he be dejected and diſtreſſed when he was *now* entering upon thoſe ſufferings, which he knew would aſſuredly bring on his devoted country theſe dreadful inflictions. If he indulged and manifeſted ſuch grief for only *one ſingle perſon*, for the death of his dear friend Lazarus, how inexpreſſibly muſt he ſuffer for the deſtruction of a very *large collective body* of men, to whom he was connected by the common endearing bond of natural affection and country?

In this manner, I apprehend, the agony of our Lord, and his prayer to God that his cup might paſs from him, may be rationally accounted for, without recurring to any impious and abſurd hypotheſis which derogates from the wiſdom, rectitude, and goodneſs of the Deity, and diſparages the innocence and merit of this illuſtrious ſufferer, aſcribing it, I mean, to the dereliction and wrath of God, the temptation and tyranny of Satan, into whoſe power he was during this ſcene totally delivered, or to the incumbent

weight

weight of all the sins of the whole world, whose ponderous and oppressive load, during these moments, he was permitted of God to feel and support. I humbly conceive that his unsuccessfulness in reclaiming and reforming the Jews—the desertion of his disciples—the perception of the insult and ill usage he was shortly to sustain, the arrest and seizure of his person, the illegal process through which he was to pass, the injurious and contumelious treatment he would experience in the conduct of it, being buffeted, delivered up to the Romans, vested with mock royalty, scourged, imprisoned, crucified—the foresight of the calamities and persecutions of his followers for maintaining and spreading his religion—and the imminent destruction of his country—these are causes adequate to such an effect. Especially if we add, that the great and unremitting labour, in which he had been employed for the *five* days which preceded his *agony*, must necessarily have contributed to render him low and weak at this time, and reduced him to a state of great debility and lassitude. This *combination* of painful ideas collecting, as in a focus, their whole accumulated energy and force, and pouring in a strong vehement stream upon an exquisitely sensible and tender spirit, so entirely penetrated and overwhelmed it, as to render the interposition of an heavenly messenger

neceſſary to ſtrengthen and ſupport him. So violent was the commotion excited by theſe ſad images obtruding all at once upon his mind, that he complained that his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death *. And in ſuch a ſituation,

* The expreſſions uſed by the ſacred writers to repreſent the intenſeneſs of his agony, are the moſt ſtrong and emphatical which could have been employed. Περιλυπος *exceedingly ſorrowful, exceſſively diſtreſſed.* Περιλυπος εστιν η ψυχη μου εως θανατου. *Matt.* xxvi. 38.—Εκθαμβεισθαι, uſed by *Mark*, Ch. xiv. 33, ſignifies to be *ſtunned and overwhelmed* with any paſſion, to be *fixed in aſtoniſhment*, to *be loſt in wonder and amazement.* It is uſed to expreſs the *extreme terror and conſternation* of the women at the unexpected ſight of an Angel in our Lord's ſepulchre. *Mark* xvi. 5, 6. And the *great amazement* of the multitude at beholding the miracle wrought on the lame man. *Acts* iii. 11.—Αδημονειν is a ſtrong expreſſion, and ſignifies to be in *great dejection*, to ſuffer the *laſt anguiſh and diſtreſs of mind.* Κλεοπατραν περιεμενε, και βραδυνουσης αδημονων ηλυε. He [*Antony*] anxiouſly expected *Cleopatra:* and upon her delaying to come, he *ſunk into the laſt dejection* and diſtreſs. *Plutarch in vitâ Antonii*, p. 939. *Edit. Francof.* 1620. Εφ' ῳ δη ὁ ἑτερος αυτων αδημονησας, εαυτον εσφαξε. On which account one of them was ſo *dejected*, that he laid violent hands on himſelf. *Dio Caſſius*, Tom. II. p. 924. *Edit. Reimari, Hamburgh*, 1752. Καν τουτῳ και των Ρωμαιων τινες αδημονησαντες, οια εν χρονιῳ πολιορκια—μετεστησαν. In the mean time ſome of the *Romans*, being *extremely dejected*, as is uſual in a tedious ſiege, revolted to the enemy. *Dio Caſſius*, p. 1080. Ejuſdem editionis. Ηδημονει μεν γαρ ορων

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ſituation, amidſt the tumult of ſo many painful reflections crowding in perpetual ſucceſſion upon a delicate mind, and in the near proſpect of ſuch injurious treatment and ſuch an excruciating death, is not the conſternation and ſenſibility our Lord expreſſed, *natural*, and the petition he preferred to heaven, in ſuch a criſis, if it pleaſed God to let this cup paſs from him, the very firſt dictate of the human heart, and the genuine conſtant language of a dependent creature when involved in diſtreſs?

I ſhall conclude this Diſſertation with the reflections of a very judicious author*. "In the firſt place, ſays this ingenious writer, this befel our Lord juſt as he had finiſhed his public miniſtry.

τα παραλογον της γυναικος προς αυτον μισος ουκ αποκεκρυμμενον. He *ſuffered the laſt anguiſh and diſtreſs* at ſeeing his wife's abhorrence of him, which he did not expect, or ſhe ſtudy to diſſemble. *Joſephus*, *Tom.* I. p. 760. *Edit. Havercamp.* Ηδημονουν δε, μη φθασας καταλυσαι το παν εργον ουκ εξαρκεσει προς τελος αγαγειν την προαιρεσιν. But they were *in the utmoſt diſtreſs*, leſt the king, after demoliſhing the whole work, ſhould not be able to execute his deſign. *Joſephus*, p. 778. *Haverc.* Αδημονουντα δε τον βασιλεα επι τη απαγορευσει. The emperor being *greatly diſtreſſed* at this repulſe. *Sozomen*, *Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib.* I. p. 14. *Edit. Cantab.* 1720. Αδημονουντας δε τους ιδιους ςρατιωτας ὡς ἡττηθεντας ὁρων. Seeing his ſoldiers *greatly dejected* on account of their being defeated. *Socrates Hiſt. Eccl.* p. 137. See alſo p. 356. *Edit. Reading*, *Cantab.* 1720.

* Moore on our Saviour's Agony, p. 83—86.

miniſtry. Intenſeneſs of thought, in a long courſe of exerciſe, is, ordinarily, productive of, or ſucceeded by, perceptions that are irkſome and tedious. Such ſort of buſineſs naturally ends with fatigue; and fatigue diſcovers itſelf through all the avenues of the ſenſes, as well in the mind as in the body. And at ſuch a ſeaſon, it is notorious, the paſſions of grief and ſorrow lie moſt open and expoſed to objects which excite pain. Evils that are at other times tolerable, come now with double force and make deep impreſſion. The obſervation on this circumſtance, was the reſult of the firſt branch of our enquiry. It is repeated here becauſe it ſerves to illuſtrate the reaſons, or is itſelf one, why Jeſus begun to be ſorrowful and very heavy.

" Again. This happened to him when he was entering upon a new ſcene of ſufferings. At ſuch a criſis we find things future begin to have an actual exiſtence, and are, as it were, quickened into life. The paſſions, big with expectation, are ready to break forth to meet their objects. There is always ſomething vivid and ſtrong in the perception of bare novelty itſelf. But when the novelty has a group of painful objects, the perceptions are more intereſting, and alarm the whole human frame. Let us ſuppoſe one's-ſelf to be about being reduced from a ſtate of affluence to penury; or to be

bereaved

bereaved of one's friends; or to undergo the amputation of a leg or an arm;—what kind of perceptions ſhould we have? Would they not create a horror to the mind, agitate the animal ſpirits, or ſtrike on the fine fibres of the heart and brain ſo as to make us ſhudder? If this be agreeable to common experience on ſuch occaſions, common experience is a clue that will help to unravel the cauſes of the ſore amazement of our Lord at this juncture.

"Again. He was now on the ſpot where he was to prepare himſelf and meet his ſufferings. There may be facts tranſacted, or a variety of events to which we are ſubject, which will make the bare ſight of places raiſe a combination of ideas and diſturb and perplex the mind. It is ſo natural to connect things with places, that very often we make the latter a ſort of focus where the moment of the whole buſineſs is collected. Have we a cauſe to litigate, or are we called to defend our country? The entrance into the court of judicature, or firſt view of the field of battle, ſhall give a more warm and ſenſible turn to the affections and paſſions, than perhaps we ſhall feel through the whole trial, or meet with in the actual engagement. And if this was not exactly the caſe of our Lord, yet as he came hither on purpoſe to prepare and meet his ſufferings, thoſe ſufferings muſt neceſ-

ſarily

ſarily be repreſented and brought to the full view of his imagination. In order to ſuit ourſelves to a condition, that condition muſt be ſurveyed and entered into by the mind. Wherefore we may ſuppoſe, that the firſt perception our Lord had, when he was at the place, was the kind and importance of the evils to which he was now to ſubmit. This ſuppoſition is both pious and natural. Then we addreſs the ſupreme Being with propriety, when we have viewed the exigency of our affairs. We ſeldom need to court objects of pain. They are known to intrude themſelves too often with a ſort of eagerneſs. But in the preſent circumſtance they are called for, and the attention of the mind to them is, as it were, demanded. Wherefore our Lord could not but be conſcious of the perception he had of the evils before him. And that conſciouſneſs muſt encreaſe in proportion to the number and weight they bore. It is agreeable to the natural order of things that it ſhould be ſo. So that it is no wonder if a round of miſery was the only perception he was for a time conſcious of. Now, here, was he to be betrayed by one of his own diſciples—ſeized and bound like a thief—abandoned by his friends—led away and treated with cruel and indignant uſage. And the conſequences hereof, replete with evils, found eaſy acceſs, we may ſuppoſe, to a mind like

like his. The language of the beſt human heart on ſuch an occaſion would be, Oh! what will become of my country, and of the men I love! What an agitation would a man feel in his animal ſpirits, and how acute and powerful the operation between his paſſions and their objects in ſuch a ſtate and criſis as this! It is evident the perception of miſery, now, is right, and as it ſhould be: And the commotion that enſues is natural, and what will be. With reſpect to the latter, reaſon is too ſublime, or comes too ſlow to have any thing preſently to do in the caſe. The violence of the commotion muſt ceaſe before the underſtanding can attend to the dictates of reaſon. After this manner, probably, was Jeſus exerciſed at this juncture."

FINIS.

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